

THE ART OF FILM

FEATURING
ARTWORK
FROM

Terryl Whitlatch
Aaron McBride
Dave Seeley
Feng Zhu



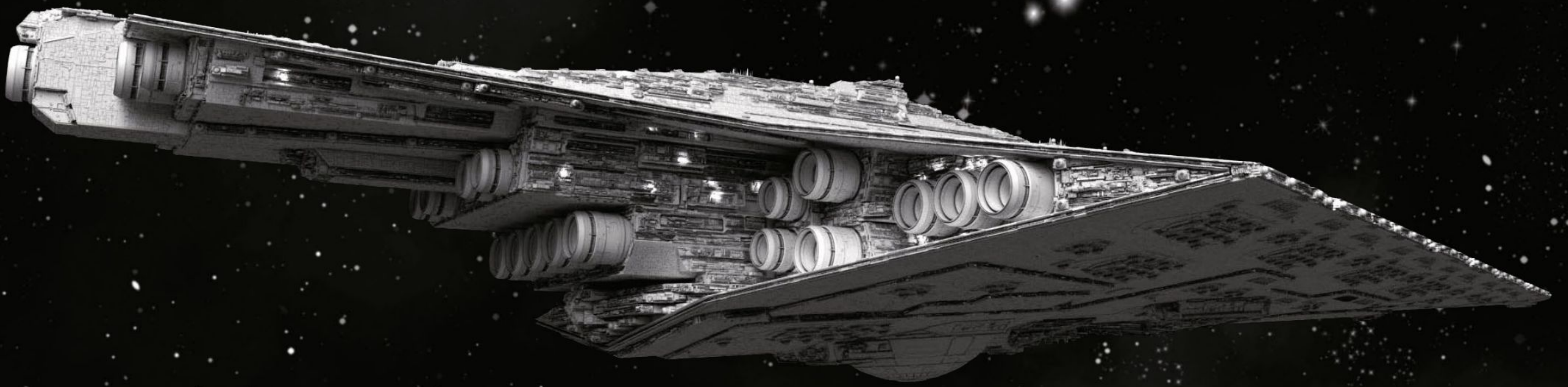
Digital
Edition

STAR WARS

ART INSPIRED BY A GALAXY FAR, FAR AWAY...



FOURTH
EDITION



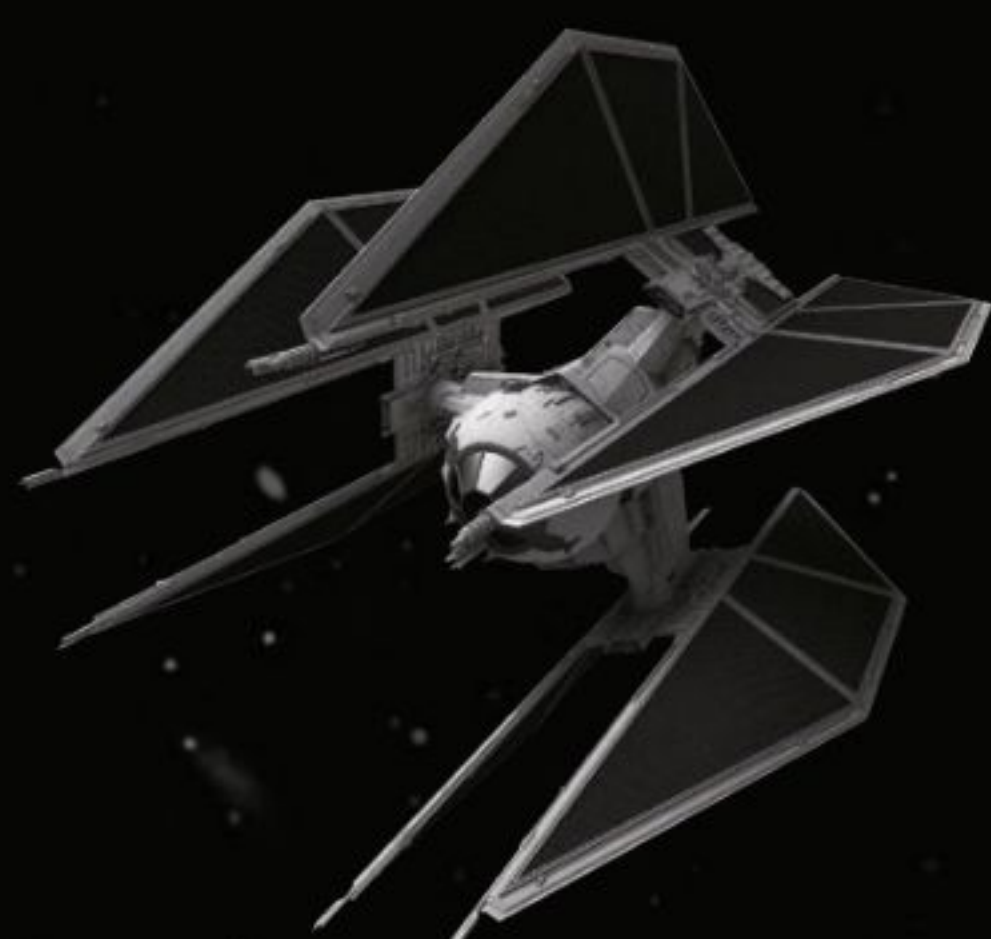
FEATURED ARTISTS



Star Wars Identities
ILM Art Dept/
ArtStation Challenge
Mario Alberti
Morgan Yon
Fred Palacio
Jon Foster
Izzy Medrano
Cecilia G.F.
Andy Fairhurst
Kai Carpenter
Malcolm Tween
Grant Gould
Fan Gao

Christian Waggoner
Doug Cowan
Hugh Fleming
Matt Busch
Matt Rhodes
Tony Foti
Aaron McBride
Sean Marino
Stephen Hayford
Terese Nielsen
Terryl Whitlatch
Paul Dainton
Ansel Hsiao
Brandon Kenney

Dave Seeley
Pavel Goloviy
Andrew March
Cat Staggs
Simon Goinard
Randy Martinez
Andrew
Theophilopoulos
Karen Hallion
Josh Viers
Michael Pedro
Feng Zhu
Bobby Pontillas







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PRESENTS

THE ART OF FILM

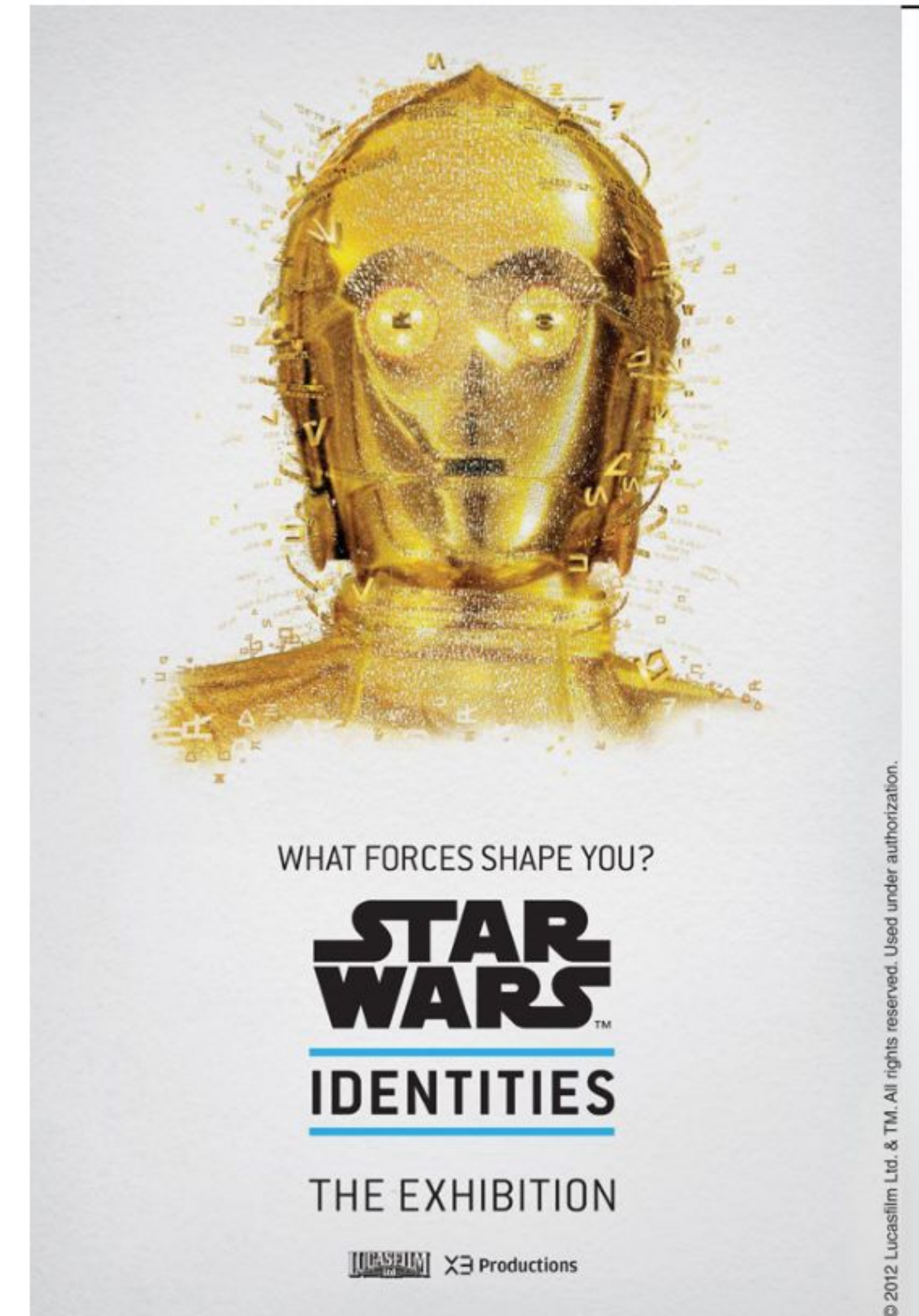
Welcome to another celebration of incredible art inspired by a galaxy far, far away...

In this reissue of our first volume of Star Wars: The Art of Film, you'll find a catalogue of artists' work, dedicated to the varying locations, space-travelling transport and friendly (and not-so friendly) faces from George Lucas' most renowned creation. You'll also be given an insight into the artistic world of Star Wars, including some exclusive art that was created for the digital art magazine ImagineFX (an essential source of pro art tips and advice). The mighty Feng Zhu created a wonderful, wintry scene set on the ice planet Hoth, which you can check out on page 156, and you can enjoy the traditional portrait art skills of Hugh Fleming over on page 60. So what are you waiting for? Delve into the fantastic world of art of one of the greatest sci-fi universes of all time!





The image of the talkative C-3PO is made up of his own words meticulously rendered in Aurebesh. Darth Maul is made up mainly of lots of tiny Darth Mauls!



STAR WARS IDENTITIES

Discover the true characters, and find the secrets, in these unique works in the touring exhibition

When the original Star Wars movie burst onto cinema screens almost 40 years ago, nobody could have realised just what an impact it and its sequels would have on the lives of so many people. At the heart of the story are characters we all fell in love with – but who are they really? This is the question the touring exhibition Star Wars Identities aims to discover – and along the way you can discover your own true self.

The exhibition, that concludes its journey in the Netherlands in 2018, brings together unique art and media from the Star Wars archives. Some of it is commissioned for the show, some of it original narrative art from the Lucasfilm archives. There are over 200 original props, costumes and artworks from all six Star Wars films.

“Lucasfilm wanted it to be educational and so after a lot of thinking we came up with the idea of exploring the characters, and

that is how we ended up exploring the notion of identity,” explains communications director and museum liaison at X3 Productions Sophie Desbiens. “The exhibition basically asks: what makes you, you? We use – in parallel – the evolution of Luke Skywalker and Anakin (Darth Vader), who started off with similar origins and ended up quite differently.”

The exhibition examines the evolution of the personalities of famous Star Wars characters through their stories. With the help of a scientific committee made up of specialists from neuro-sciences, psychology and genetics, the show organisers defined ten elements that compose someone’s identity and applied this to the characters of Star Wars. If you visit, you get the same treatment and have the opportunity to not only look at what makes you who you are but also to create your own Star Wars identity.

The centrepiece of the show is a set of unique illustrations commissioned on the theme of

“Let me tell you, the entire agency’s staff fought over who was going to get to work on this project!”

Star Wars and identity. The creators of these stunning pieces, Jean-François LeBlanc, Sébastien Maheux and Louis Hébert, all work for the organisers’ ad agency Bleublancrouge. “Let me tell you,” confides Sophie, “the entire agency’s staff fought over who was going to get to work on that project!”

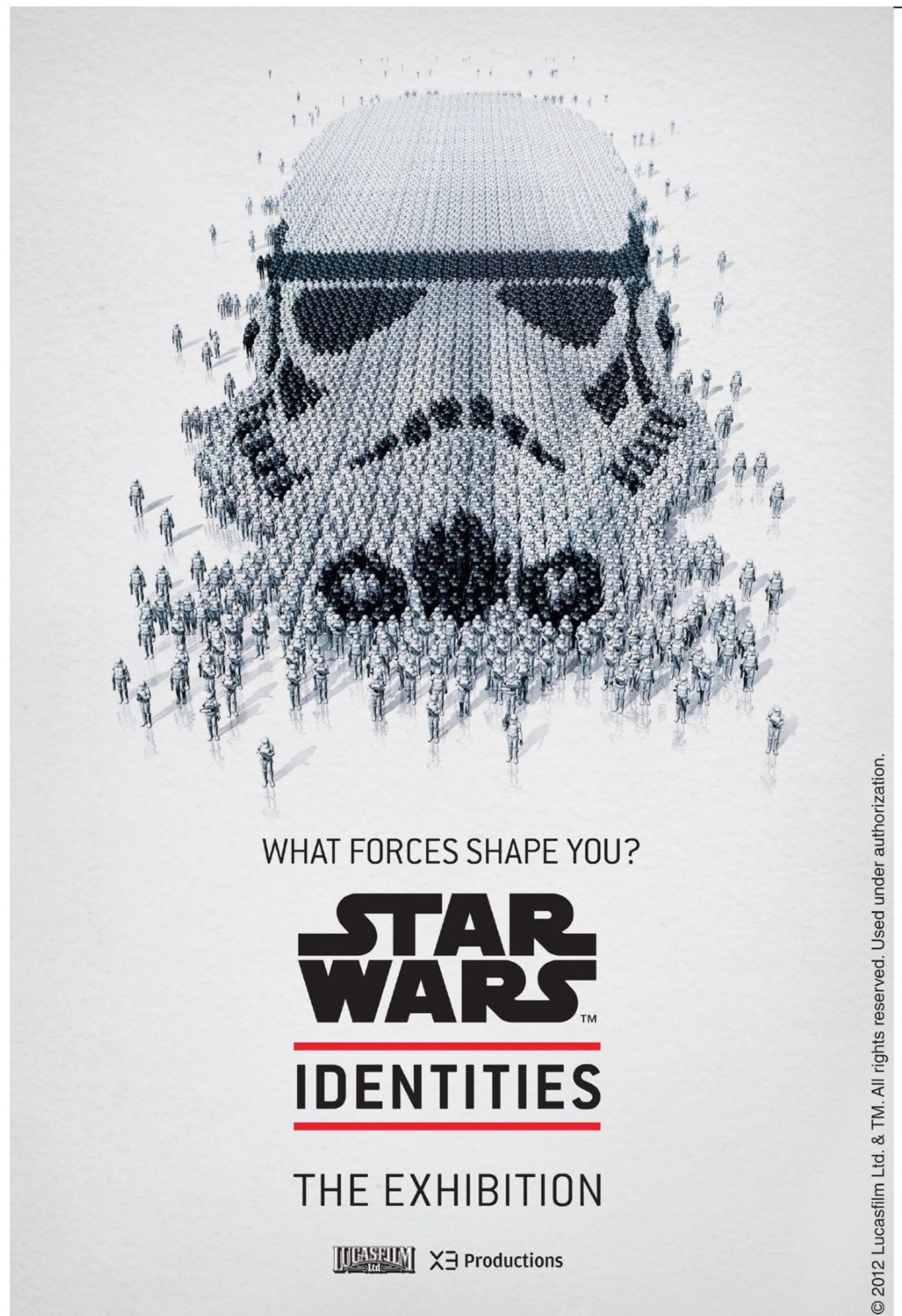
The idea of the exhibition is to explore what makes people who they are. The challenge for the artists was to render that concept visually. Each illustration explores what makes the character who he/she/it is, in a manner reminiscent of Arcimboldo’s famous portraits composed of fruit and vegetables.

There are secrets in all the illustrations. The Millennium Falcon is hidden somewhere in this Darth Vader portrait. Can you see it?



In the Yoda portrait, can you find Luke, R2-D2 and Obi-Wan Kenobi? There are also a few levitating rocks!

Stormtroopers have meaning and identity only in a mass of Stormtroopers – with their sinister leader literally at the centre



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Take the Darth Vader illustration. The ultimate master of evil, Vader became a powerful Sith Lord when he chose the Dark Side of the Force. At the service of the Emperor, he became an agent of war intent on ruling the entire galaxy. "His portrait illustrates this by making him a literal black hole of space in the galaxy, and his likeness is made up of spaceships with his ultimate weapon of destruction – the Death Star – as his brain," explains Sophie.

In the Yoda portrait, we can see how the character's story plays in the illustration: on Dagobah, his planet of exile, the Jedi master has become one with the Force after his physical existence ends. "His absence is now a spiritual presence in the environment. This translates in the fact that his portrait is made up of empty space," shares Sophie.

The Stormtroopers are an interesting subject, considering that they are not distinct, singular characters. "They have strength in numbers, and so the power of one

Stormtrooper is represented here by the multitude," says Sophie. "It's all for one," she explains, "and their leader, Darth Vader, is at the centre of it all. Literally. Try to find Vader among the multitude in this portrait. And as a bonus, try to find the intruder, namely a little droid called R2-D2."

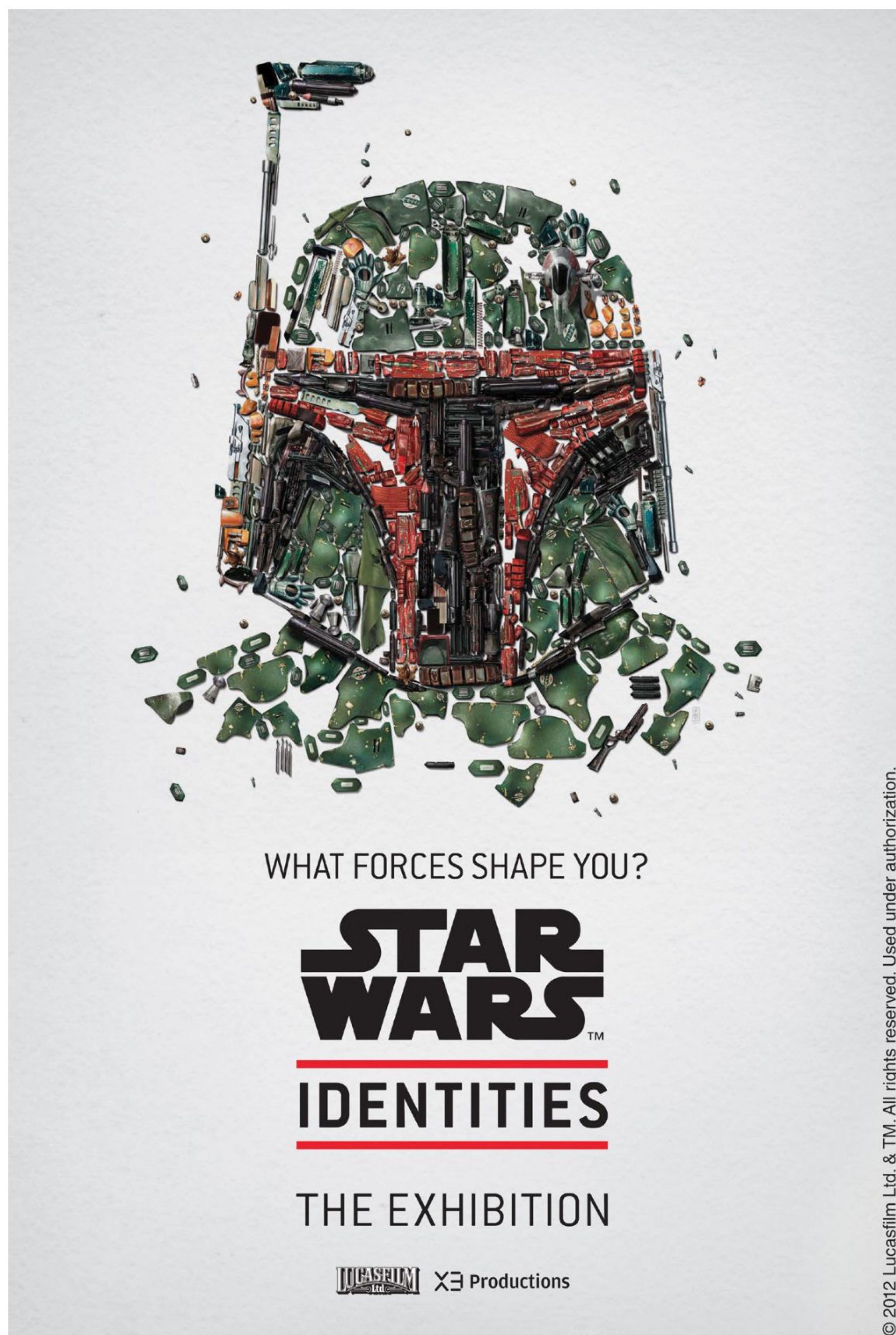
In fact, all the illustrations created for Star Wars Identities feature hidden secrets. "The C-3PO illustration is one of my favourites because of its intense geekness," shares Sophie. "Built by Anakin Skywalker, C-3PO is an etiquette and protocol droid who is also fluent in six million forms of communication. Throughout the saga, C-3PO has exhibited a fairly nervous and worry-prone personality and is also known to talk incessantly. He is represented here by his own quotations, taken from the first six movies and translated into Aurebesh. Yes, all these symbols are a fictional alphabet of basic language in the Star Wars universe. How crazy is that? The designers took the time





You not only recognise the characters but also recall the themes and incidents represented by the component elements

The exhibition is in three sections, which follow the progression of identity from childhood to adulthood: first Origins, then Influences, and finally Choices



to take famous C-3PO quotations from the first six films, translated them into Aurebesh, and created his portrait out of that. Nuts!”

It’s a testament to the strength of the characters created by George Lucas that these heroes and villains still inspire artists today. Sophie believes it’s because they are just like us. Star Wars is about archetypes and (in Jungian terms) the collective unconscious. The story George Lucas set out to tell is the story human beings have been telling for ages. As Joseph Campbell (who is known to have influenced Lucas) explained in his book *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, this story is based on a fundamental structure, called the monomyth of the hero: something happens to a young ordinary person which means he then has to go on a quest. Along the way he will meet friends, mentors and obstacles, and he ends up in a final fight with his nemesis (representing Good vs Evil). Through that adventure, he will come of age and find himself.

“A love of Star Wars gets transmitted from one generation to the next. It’s very powerful, just like mythology”

“Basically, Star Wars is modern mythology. And that is why these characters are loved the world over and are still relevant today, almost 40 years after their creation. It is amazing to see that the love of Star Wars gets transmitted from one generation to the next – it is very powerful, just like mythology. What I like the most is that you can see in people’s eyes the happiness it brings them,” concludes Sophie, before adding: “That always impresses me. I really love it and feel really lucky to work on such an amazing project.”

www.starwarsidentities.com

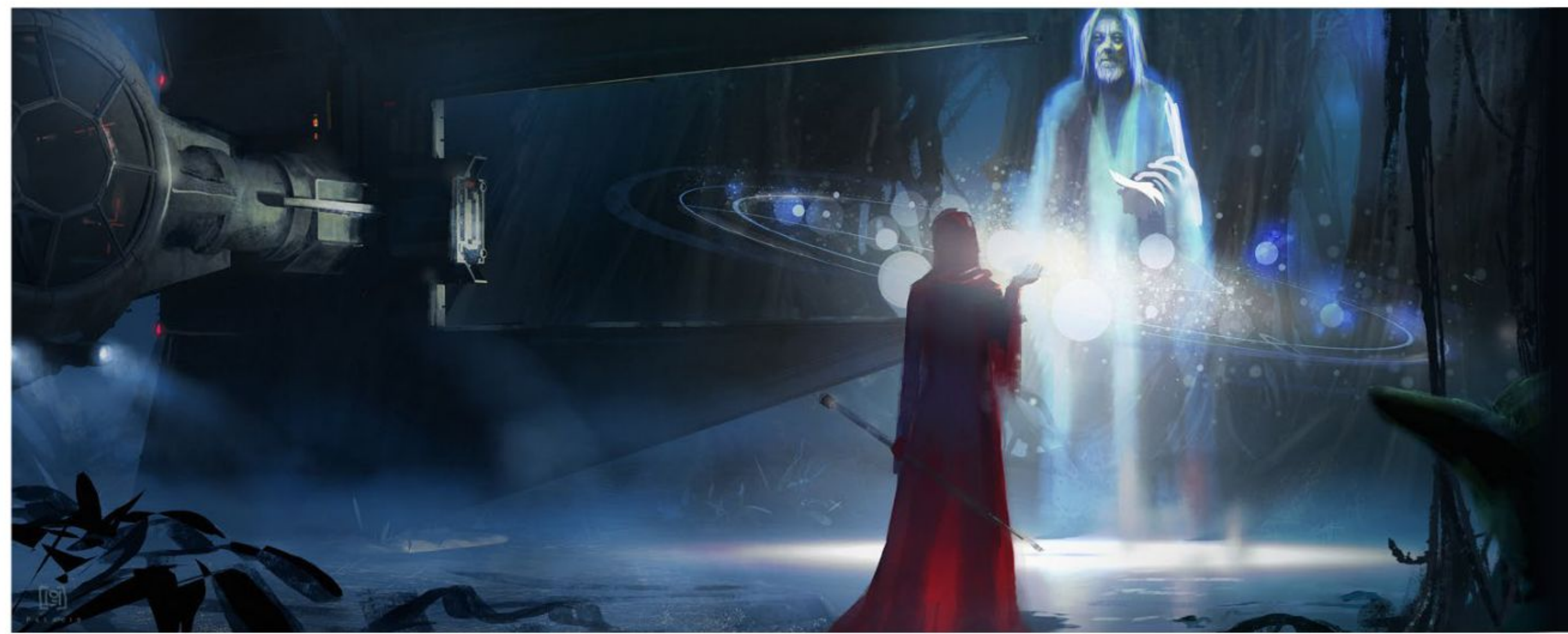


THE ILM & ARTSTATION CHALLENGE

ILM and ArtStation teamed up to give entrants experience of what it's like working on concept art for Star Wars



A scene rich in Star Wars lore, from third-placed Fred Palacio, who got the biggest prize of all...



Last year ArtStation made the online art competition exciting again, working with one of the most influential and popular film-art studios in the world, Industrial Light & Magic (ILM). Their joint competition gave entrants an inside view of how pro concept artists work.

It all started with a meeting at the FMX conference in 2015, when chat turned to a question: how could an art competition help recruit a new generation of concept artists to work on the upcoming Star Wars films? David Nakabayashi, creative director of the ILM art department, came up with the idea of a challenge that would simulate a real production experience. For ArtStation's soon-to-be challenge manager, Daniel Wade, the chance was too good to miss, and the 2016 ILM Art Department Challenge was born.

"When we realised we would be running a Star Wars concept art challenge," says Daniel, "it had to be fit for purpose. Planning began on a platform that would bring art challenges into the 21st century – and withstand a record number of entrants."

ArtStation co-founder Leo Teo had already pioneered art challenges in the mid-2000s with CG Challenges. "However, the aim with the new platform was to leave behind forum-based systems in favour of a purpose-built platform with a greater community emphasis," says Daniel. "The most exciting aspect was that it was also a recruitment challenge. Those artists who gave this opportunity everything would likely

help shape the look of future Star Wars films."

Italian-based artist Mario Alberti predominantly works in comics. But the appeal of taking part in this competition was the same thing that got him into art in the first place: a sense of awe, and a desire to soak up anything that might make him a better artist.

"I'm always hungry for new stuff to see and learn from," he says. "I saw this as a chance to learn something new, maybe get to know a bit about working in films. Plus it's Star Wars!"

That sense of awe had kicked in. "It felt a bit like a fish diving in a new sea, with all different kinds of colourful and beautiful creatures swimming around it," says Mario. "I was confident I wouldn't drown, and that I'd get as much fun as I could out of it." The artist did more than that – he won first place.

The competition consisted of three major challenges: a keyframe challenge, a vehicle design challenge, and a boot-camp style challenge, with many deadlines and changing design briefs and requirements.

"For each challenge stage, the ILM art department created a design brief which all artists had to follow, along with deadlines and limited guidance," says Daniel. Gone were the days of regular positive crits on friendly forums. "Sometimes the art directors gave us general advice after they viewed an overall panel of submissions," says runner-up Morgan Yon. "That motivates you a lot. We also had something special: a 'Like' button on the bottom of our images. Those small things gave me a lot of confidence.



Italian artist Mario Alberti triumphed out of 3,888 artists who entered the first stage of the art challenge.

I remember when I had the first 'Like' from David Nakabayashi – that was intense."

Accompanying David on the judging panel for the challenges was a who's-who of industry legends, including Aaron McBride, Alex Jaeger, Doug Chiang, Jason Horley, Christian Alzmann, James Clyne, Amy Beth Christenson, Bianca Draghici, Erik Tiemens, Kev Jenkins, Kilian Plunkett, Ryan Church, Stephen Tappin, Thang Le and Yanick Dusseault. When each challenge was completed, these art behemoths judged the entries and decided who would go through to the next round.

"To be honest, I had just two Likes on my work-in-progress post," says the comp's third-place artist Fred Palacio. "No comment. Just two thumbs up. So I felt I was on my own and kept going." Fred did have some help from a little friend, though: "I remember one night my nine-year-old son Matis came over and told me a vehicle looked Avatar-ish. I took one element away and, done, it worked! Everyone's opinion counts, but self-criticism is very important," he says.

Kicking things off, The Moment keyframe challenge invited artists to create two emotive images that told a cinematic story within the world of Episodes IV to VI. Keyframes could use only existing Star Wars worlds, vehicles, creatures and characters to create a story moment. A total of 3,888 artists began the challenge, with 1,010 completing this first phase. The first round of judging reduced the number of artists going through to the next round to 330.

Next, The Ride challenge asked entrants to design two new Star Wars vehicles within the aesthetic of Episodes IV to VI. Vehicles could be Rebel, Imperial or utilitarian – anything from a giant starship to a land speeder. Just under 300 artists completed The Ride challenge, and the judging phase reduced the number who went through to the final stage to 224.

The Job challenge consisted of six mini-challenges designed to push artists to their limits. Deadlines were the same as they would be in a film production, but creative briefs were changed in mid-stream to show how directors can change their minds. And the story could evolve based on key frames from artists. Everyone was kept on their toes.

"The ILM art directors asked for the best that artists could produce within tough time restrictions, and 210 artists met that challenge," says Daniel. "Although the deadlines were almost impossible and the workloads extreme, 90 percent of the artists who undertook The Job challenge completed the six mini challenges, and were awarded the title Survivor."

So what's the legacy of this exciting online challenge? For the five artists who gained honourable mentions (and eight more labelled "ILM Favourites"), it's getting kudos from their peers and with luck some commissions from companies. For the three winners, there's more kudos and some very desirable prizes from Wacom and ArtStation.

For Fred Palacio it was a surprise enough to be named in the top three. "When the result came out,



Morgan Yon dramatically reimagines the boarding of the Rebel blockade runner from the opening of Episode IV. Morgan describes getting a Like from David Nakabayashi during the art challenge as “intense.”



I overlooked my name,” he says. “I looked at the winners announcement video and that’s when I realised I was one of the three winners. I never promoted myself, but as soon as the result came out I got so many work offers.” And an interview at ILM.

“The interview with Nak (David Nakabayashi) and Jennifer Coronado was filled with positive energy.” He obviously impressed, because Fred was subsequently appointed art director at ILM Vancouver.

“The art director role is the most difficult position to fill,” said David. “We’d been keeping our eye out for over a year.”

Fred is understandably absolutely thrilled with the development. “Right now, I’m exploring a new world. I’m stepping into an arena filled with the biggest gladiators – and it seems they’re quite nice! This huge community is making a director’s vision happen and I’m happy and grateful to be in the middle of it.”

How did the competition work out for ILM overall? David gives his final thoughts: “We were thrilled about this competition because it helped us find new talent. Most importantly, it gave us the opportunity to remotely mentor people (whether they knew it or not) and help them evolve their craft. There’s nothing more exciting than being able to participate in this important, creative community.”

To see the full brief for each challenge and explore all the great art it prompted, visit the site below.

<https://ilmchallenge.artstation.com>

■ INSIGHT FROM JENNIFER CORONADO

ILM’s art department manager on being wrong...

What does it take to become a pro concept artist?

Concept artists are designing for films, games or their preferred medium. They’re interested in them because they’re better versions of their own realities or places they can only dream of being. When creating concepts, don’t get too caught up in what’s “right”. Focus on what’s right for the project. Maybe the right thing for a project is to go down a path you don’t necessarily like, just to know you have gone the wrong direction – that might be what your director needs. Concept art is about being a collaborator. Sometimes you’ll be thrilled, sometimes dismayed. It’s how you deal with those situations that will make you a true pro.

Which software and tools should be prioritised?

Most of the ILM art department’s concept artists work in 3D in some form. While you don’t want the tools to bog down your design, what you’re creating will likely be built by someone else in production. Everyone at ILM has a core speciality, but can also branch out into different areas. Being flexible is very beneficial.

Do you have any good tips for finding inspiration?

Talk to people about your ideas, get feedback. Sometimes walking away from what you’re doing, giving yourself a moment, can get ideas flowing again. I’m impressed every day by the amazing things people do under tight deadlines. Many of our team do personal work. A great teacher once said, “If you don’t live a life, after a while you’re just an empty shell repeating the same thing over and over again.”

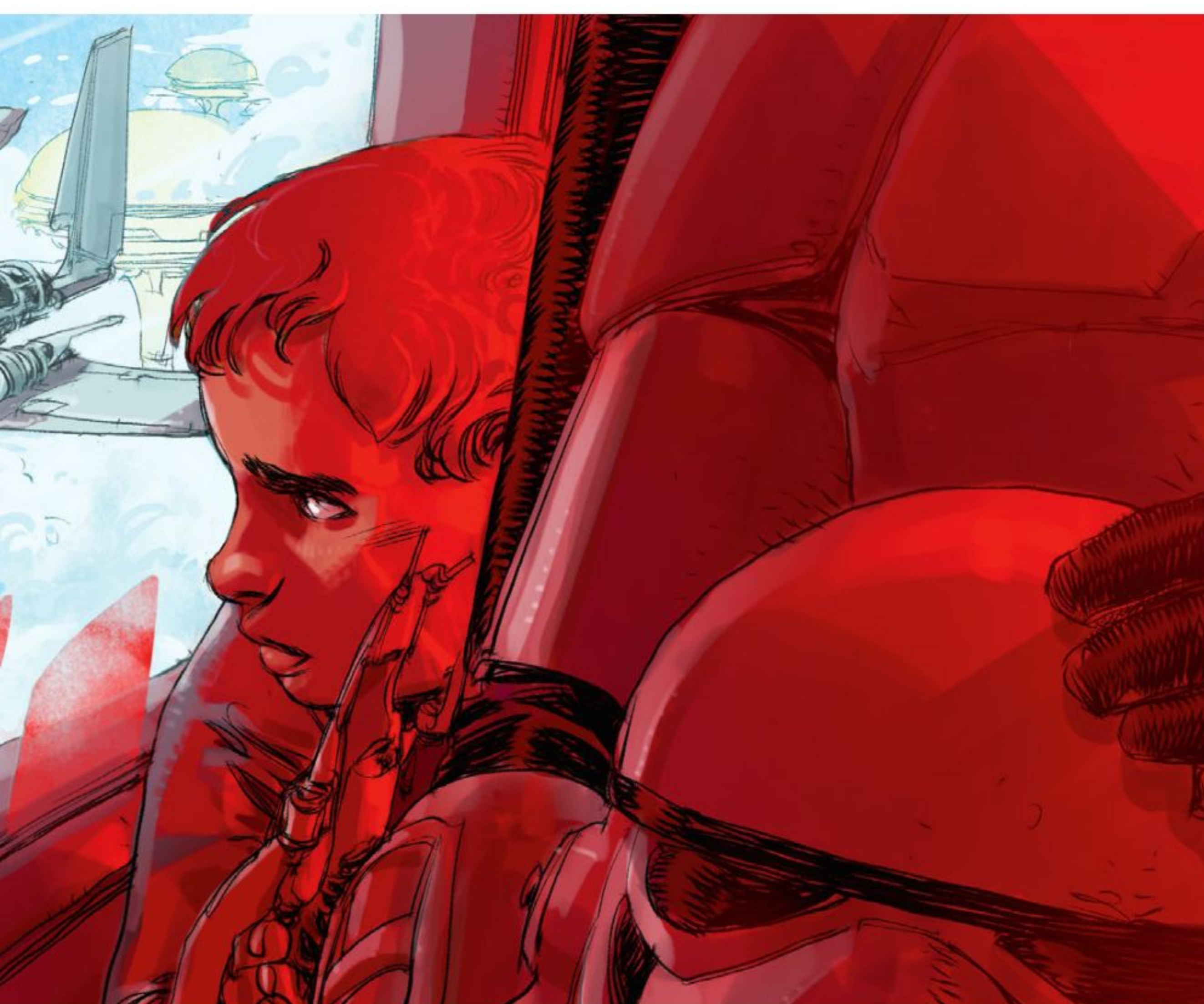
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MARIO ALBERTI

First place in the Challenge went to the Italian comics artist, illustrator and writer





M

ario Alberti loves Star Wars. "I saw Star Wars when I was 11, and it stuck with me ever since," he says. "It's embedded in my DNA. Then again, that's because of the emotions, wonder and feelings that it brought with it. I have always

tried to replicate that in my work. The thought that I can somehow reach other people with that kind of strength, or at least try to, is what drives me always."

When it came to the challenge, he explains, "What I did my best to meet was the briefs' request to always put a story behind what I was illustrating, even if it was just designing new vehicles or characters. I am first and foremost a storyteller, whatever my skills are at providing a nice piece of art. Every detail, even the smallest scratch on a speeder, can have a story behind it, and what I enjoy doing most is just that: to come up with stories that can bring depth and emotion to an illustration. To know that I managed to do that was the greatest compliment I could hope for from ILM."

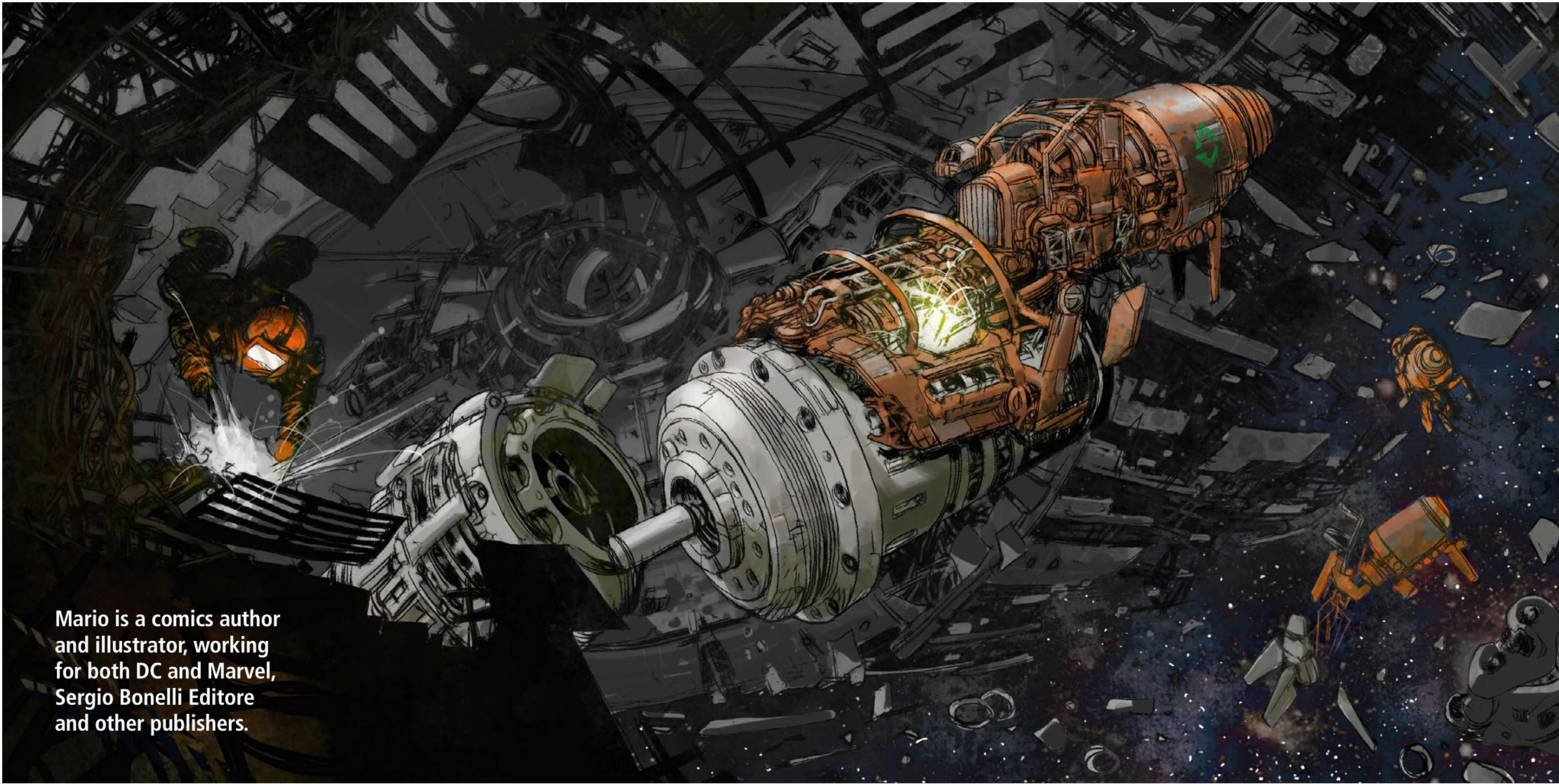
www.marioalberti.com

The Battle of Hoth as depicted by Mario Alberti, overall winner of the ILM Art Department Challenge.



"He can draw like nobody's business," the judges said. "There's so much story and meaning to every frame. And he framed every board like a cinematographer."





Mario is a comics author and illustrator, working for both DC and Marvel, Sergio Bonelli Editore and other publishers.

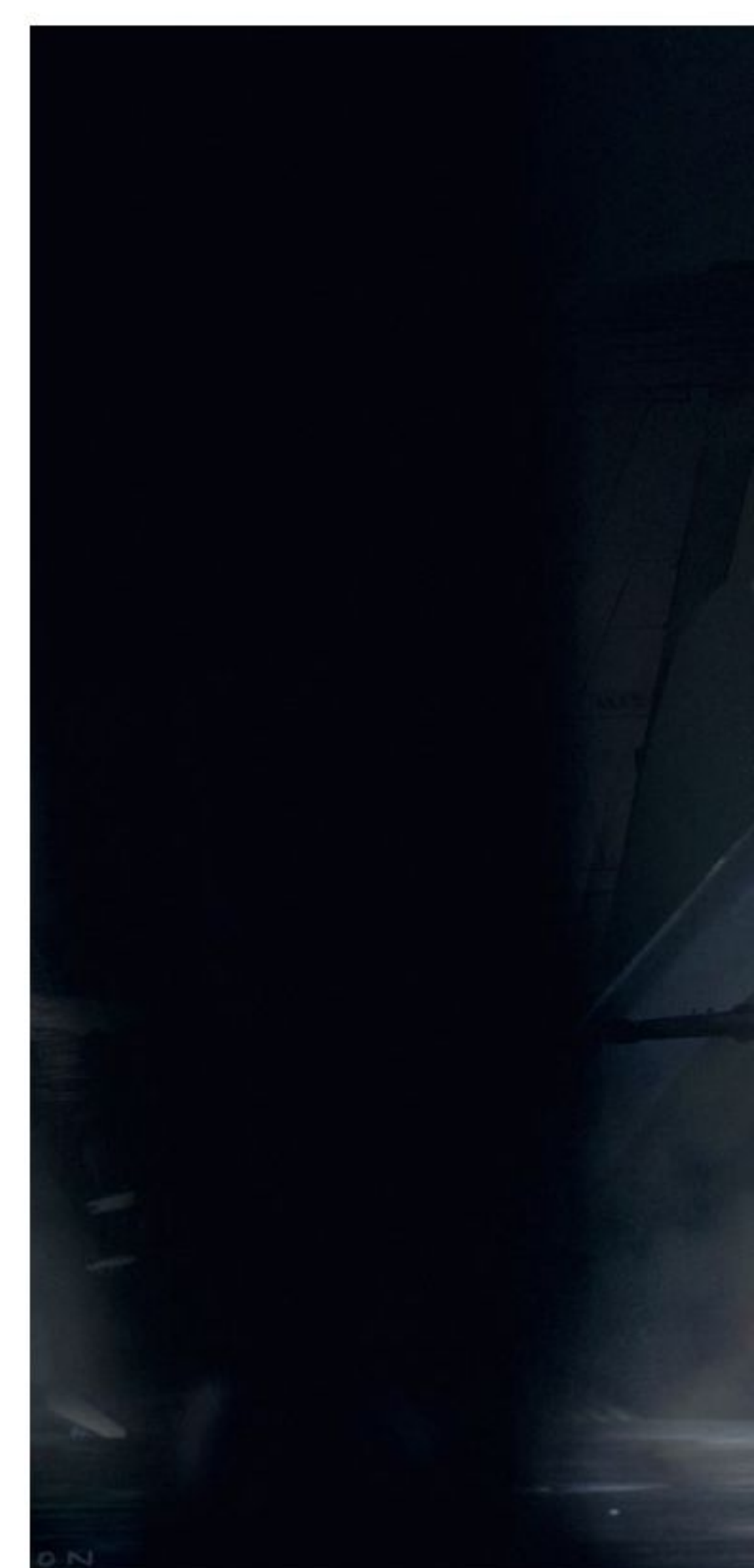


Morgan was awarded second place in the ILM/ArtStation challenge. "He probably drew the largest Wampa ever!" said the judges.



MORGAN YON

The French games concept artist brings experience and emotion to the Challenge





Morgan Yon knows first-hand how hard the job can be. He's a full-time concept artist at Ubisoft Montpellier in the south of France, working on the Assassin's Creed franchise among other games and films. "It's tough," he says, "having to switch from one idea to another, to be quick at rendering and painting. I consider my job a constant battle. But when you achieve your goal by creating an image that is well welcomed by the community, it's a great feeling!"

So how did he approach the Challenge? "I really focused on storytelling," he explains. "I tried to stick to simple shapes and strong moods. I truly love the colour palette of '80s movies and tried to keep this in mind while working on pictures. Star Wars is an epic adventure, but I tried to depict scenes with emotion – for example, one with a giant four-legged machine comes from an old memory of mine: the first time I saw Jurassic Park and the brachiosaurus scene!"

www.morgan-yon.com



The judges said Morgan's image of Leia and Wicket looking at the sunset (above) is "a great mood piece, a great piece for defining a story. ... And who would think of Han Solo hugging C-3PO? That's a good idea!"



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FRED PALACIO

A passion for exploring leads to delving
into unanswered questions in Star Wars...





Fred developed his own Star Wars story based on Luke's severed hand. The artist received a key critique from his nine-year-old son for his vehicle art.



Fred's life story is almost an adventure movie in itself: born in Paris, he moved to Germany to become an engineer at 18 but after two years he switched to an artistic career. After six years as a 3D artist, he returned to France, where he freelanced in the advertising and film industries. After one big project, he decided to backpack around the world, painting and drawing from South America to Indonesia, Japan and India. When he entered the challenge he had settled and started a family in Brazil; he has since "started a new adventure" in Canada.

The Challenge judges praised Fred's great colour, lighting and sense of design. "Some of his vehicle work felt evolutionary from Star Wars," they added: "it could have been early Ralph McQuarrie. At some points he was clearly channelling McQuarrie, in terms of the simplicity of some of the frames, and he knows how to compose to camera." Even in his looser sketches, they said, you could feel the emotion and mood.

www.artstation.com/artist/calypso

“I imagined Ralph McQuarrie at my side telling me to explore this or that... And that’s what I did”





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Fred was surprised to be named in the top three. Initially he didn't even notice his name among the winners.



The Star Wars Darkside covers are popular with fans of the Star Wars: Darkness series, celebrating all that's evil in the Star Wars universe



JON FOSTER

The Dark Horse cover artist with a taste for the Dark Side sheds a little light

Creating cover art for the Star Wars books came easily to an artist with Jon's eye for the dark side.

The majority of Jon's comic cover work has been for a number of Dark Horse Comics' Star Wars series. The darker elements and muted colour palette of his early years seem to have suited books that tended towards the dark side of the Force.

"I enjoyed them because the art direction went through pretty painlessly. I had done some paperback book covers for Star Wars before and they seemed to be much more difficult than the comic books. At the time, the people I was working with made it very enjoyable. I felt like I could do what felt right and was important, and they were okay with that."

www.jonfoster.com



Jon's cover for issue 3 of The Hunt for Aurra Sing, from a four-issue special set

The front cover Jon painted for the first issue of *The Hunt for Aurra Sing*, a mini-series which was part of the *Star Wars: Republic* series





IZZY MEDRANO

In a universe of archetypal characters, Izzy finds room for one more psycho...

Concept artist and illustrator Izzy Medrano is a story-first kind of guy, which goes some way towards explaining his love of Star Wars. “I love a good narrative,” he says. This is something that he clearly applied to his show-stopping illustration *The Tyranny of Lady Vex* (right). “Lady Vex was born of a need to create a good villain for my other character, Granny Claymore, an old alcoholic hermit that had lost her connection with the Force,” Izzy explains. “She made up for it with a huge claymore-esque lightsaber. I figured that with a strong punkish personality like hers she’d need a decent foe. Enter Lady Vex.”

Izzy came up with the idea for his villainous character during an impromptu sketching session. “I imagined Vex as being completely insane,” he explains. “She is driven by a sense of psychotic justice, dealing in absolutes.” While he was thinking







Izzy's character Granny Claymore is an old alcoholic hermit who has lost her connection with the Force



“ [The Star Wars universe has] strong archetypal characters. Iconic design makes them work ”



"Your number one tool in all things art is contrast," insists Izzy

through his creation, he had iconic Star Wars design at the forefront of his mind. "The original Star Wars concept artists and model makers are, of course, huge influences," he comments. "In the new films, the work of illustrator and conceptual designer Iain McCaig blew my mind."

But just what is it about Star Wars that keeps driving artists to create new work? "It's the universe and strong archetypal characters," Izzy argues. "Iconic design makes them work. From acting to costume, story to voices, they are complete and clear characters, who aren't muddled in ambiguity."

www.cannibalcandy.com

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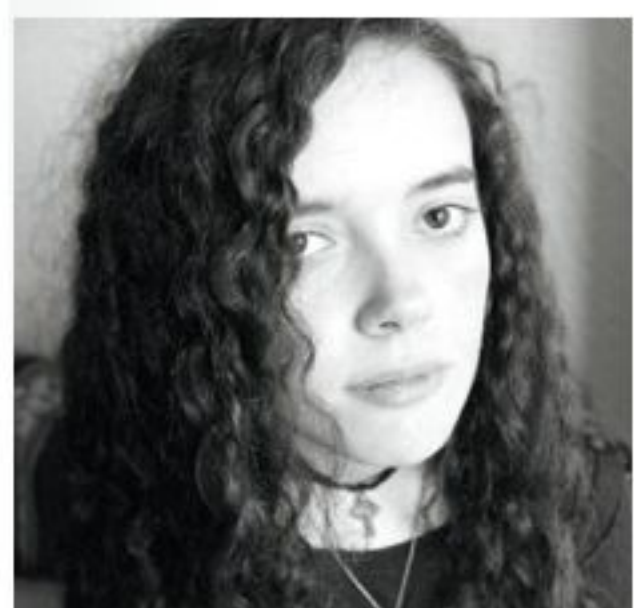
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CECILIA G.F.

Living in sunny Spain, the artist is drawn to a jungle world of permanent storms



Cecilia GF takes advantage of the scope of the Star Wars universe to find the perfect setting for her brooding Sith warrior: the Dark Temple on Dromund Kaas

Malaga, on Spain's Costa Del Sol, is renowned for its year-round sunshine. It's ironic, then, that Malaga resident Cecilia Garcia, a self-taught artist with a degree in art history, is drawn to the Dark Side and loves the rain.

Cecilia GF, as she signs herself, is a freelance artist who aims to work in the video games or film industries. Inspired by the Dark Side of the Force, she sought to capture the impact of a character within a brooding scene set in the Expanded Universe's Dromund Kaas, capital of the Sith Empire.

"Given the fact that I'm a lover of the Dark Side of the Force and I love the rain," Cecilia explains, "Dromund Kaas came to my mind. I thought of Korriban too but I wanted to see how the light of the lightsaber looks in the rain, so this planet would be perfect. Besides, Dromund Kaas seems to me a special place that contains all of that power of the Dark Side, with ruins and fascinating creatures."

Cecilia loves to explore the Star Wars universe in her personal paintings. Its sheer immensity means it leaves itself open to the imaginations of artists to add their personal visions, says Cecilia: "It's an exceptional sci-fi universe where George Lucas created a base, and from that, anyone can make it grow without the need to be 'canonical'."

"There are other universes that are not free for interpretation, but Star Wars is not like that," she elucidates. "The fan has total freedom because there are no restrictions – you can create cute illustrations or a painting with a dark theme. War scenes and everything is okay, because Star Wars contains all of them."

<http://bit.ly/Cecilia-GF>



Korriban (right) reflects Cecilia's hope that there are more people sensitive to the Force in the galaxy, not just the Skywalker family, the Emperor, Yoda and Obi-Wan...

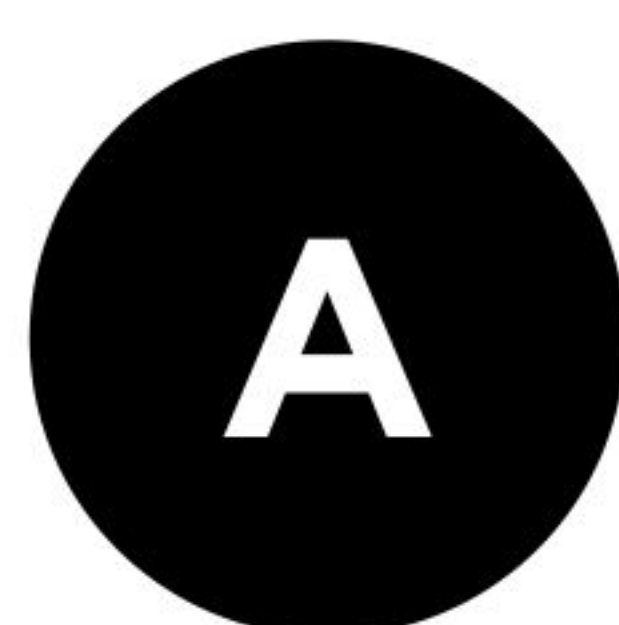


Andy's painting of Jango Fett is one of a series of profile views of key Star Wars characters – Boba Fett is another



ANDY FAIRHURST

Unusual compositions and symmetries make the Welsh artist's work stand out from the crowd



fter being commissioned to create a poster series for Acme Archives and Bottleneck Gallery to coincide with Star Wars Celebration, Welsh freelance artist Andy Fairhurst struck on the idea of painting three pivotal characters from the original trilogy in moments of reflection. "I like the central symmetrical positioning of them, and I tend to work that

way a lot," says Andy, who has been painting digitally for over 10 years. Recently he's ventured into alternative posters and movie art prints.

As for his love of Star Wars, he says: "For me personally, it was the start of everything regarding art. I was five when I saw it and, when I returned home from the cinema, I drew a space battle scene. That is my earliest memory of drawing. It still inspires me now after all these years – decades later! I don't quite

know what it is but it has a strong hold over a lot of people and is responsible for the start of many an artist's career. It's just magical."

And why does Andy enjoy painting Boba Fett so much? "It is as simple as: he just looks so cool. He is Clint Eastwood in space. He's always been my favourite – well, since Empire, anyway – and was the inspiration behind countless badass characters since."

www.andyfairhurstart.com

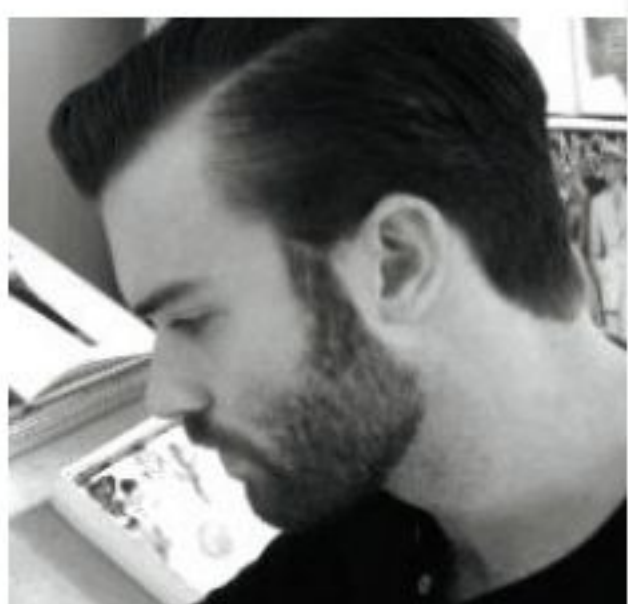






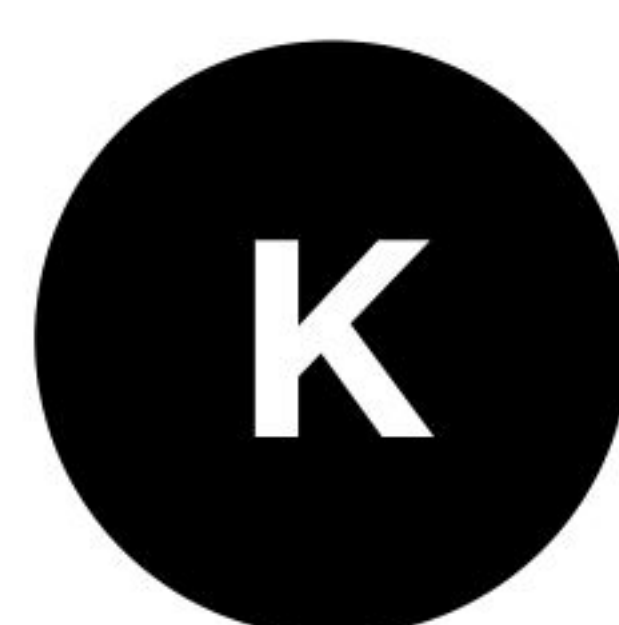
A striking image of X-Wing fighters based on the Episode VII trailer

Andy's three official posters for Acme Archives and Bottleneck Gallery feature distinctive symmetrical compositions



KAI CARPENTER

Crafting a dramatic scene in the Clone Wars continuity...



Kai created this striking image as part of a Clone Wars competition. “I wanted to do a truly dramatic image – not just compositionally but thematically dramatic. In the first portion of the show, Ahsoka’s skill puts her in danger constantly.”

For Kai, “the thing that pops about Star Wars is the operatic, grand scale of the drama. Lucas went to such lengths to fit the

story to a mythological model, and his work paid off! The story is pure mythology, and that’s a powerful draw on people all over the world.”

Kai is hugely inspired by a man many other artists admire: “Ralph McQuarrie breathed such life into Lucas’s concept, and his designs were worthy of such a grand vision. The first, and the best!”

Though he prefers traditional techniques, Kai turned to his PC for this piece. “I don’t actually work digitally anymore and, even



"Ahsoka's Trial"
abounds with telling
details that point the
viewer towards a
compelling story

then, this was a little unusual in my choice to do it on the computer," he says. "But my techniques are much the same in both mediums. I start with a coloured ground, generally either a sienna or ochre. Then I usually sit and look at the blank canvas for an hour or two, envisioning the whole piece and making notes. When I start to paint, I paint thinly at first and thicken the brush strokes as I go. Rather than creating an underpainting and working up

gradually all over, I tend to prefer to establish different parts of the composition and link them together to form the finish – I think probably because I'm impatient to get to what I saw during that two hours at the beginning!

"It's got to start with a story. That's really what pulls me through the whole thing. And as I go from there, the details fill in – Ahsoka having snatched Anakin's lightsaber from him to defend them, for instance. I liked

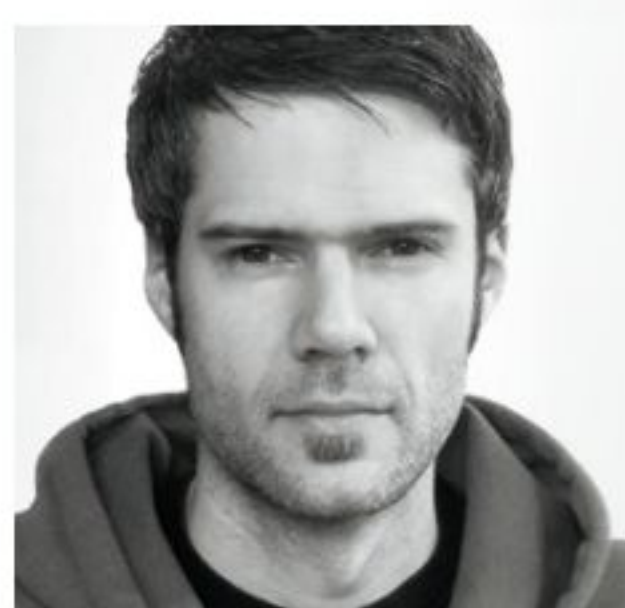
the idea of getting the cold, misty environment involved by having the lightsabers issuing steam as they move through the air."

Kai is excited about the new film. "It really looks like it's got something that the original three had," he says, "particularly the physicality of the effects, simplicity of design and grandness of vision. I can't wait to see more of that ruined post-war universe!"

www.kaicarpenter.deviantart.com



Malcolm deftly captures the essence of the characters, the tech and the atmosphere of the landmark film



MALCOLM TWEEN

From an illustration studio on the (relatively) sunny south coast of England to a galaxy far, far away...

Bournemouth, on the south coast of the British Isles, is a seaside resort best known for its proximity to the Jurassic Coast. It is also home to Digital Progression, an independent UK production studio specialising in 3D/CGI, creative retouching and post production, where Malcolm Tween has created artwork for Lucasfilm among a diverse group of other clients.

What inspired your paintings?

Usually trying to come up with something that's not been done before, also something that's not seen directly in the films.

Why does Star Wars keep driving artists to create new work?

There's a huge amount of source material. It also helps that there's some of the greatest, most iconic production design ever created.

Do you have a favourite Star Wars artist who has inspired you?

Well, there's a lot of fantastic Star Wars stuff but I always liked Noriyoshi Ohrai, John Berkey and of course Ralph McQuarrie. Phil Noto's work is always brilliant.

Can you tell us a little of how you work? What is your process?

Usually it will start with a quick Photoshop visual. For the final image I'll usually model a simple version of any of the ships/hardware in 3DS Max and use this for the basic perspective and lighting, then the rest is painted in Photoshop.

Do you approach your personal Star Wars work differently to commissioned art?

Even on the work for Lucasfilm there's quite a lot of freedom, but with some of the Star Wars work it's largely the only time I get completely free rein.

What makes a great character like Darth Vader or Luke work?

Great design and characterisation, but also the legacy of Star Wars

“ Even if someone's never seen the films, they are still aware of the characters and what they represent ”

over the years has elevated everything into something much more iconic. Even if someone's never seen the films, they are still aware of the characters and what they represent.

Are you a Star Wars fan?

Absolutely! As a child in the '70s it was by far and away my most important pop culture influence! Don't ask me about the prequels, though...

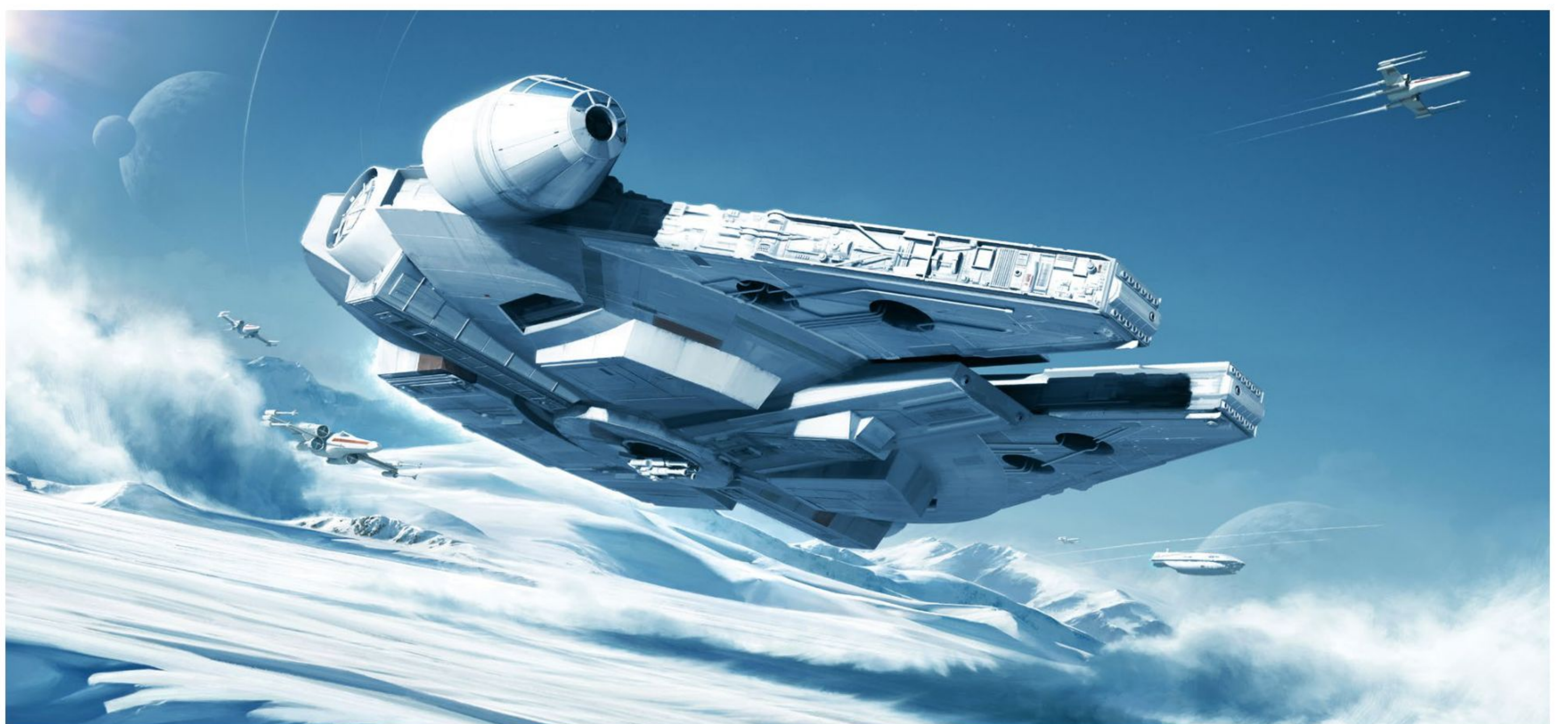
So, how excited are you about the next films?

Cautiously optimistic...

www.digitalprogression.co.uk



Malcolm's deep affection for the original trilogy shines through in his evocative AT-AT and Hoth Evacuation Celebration prints



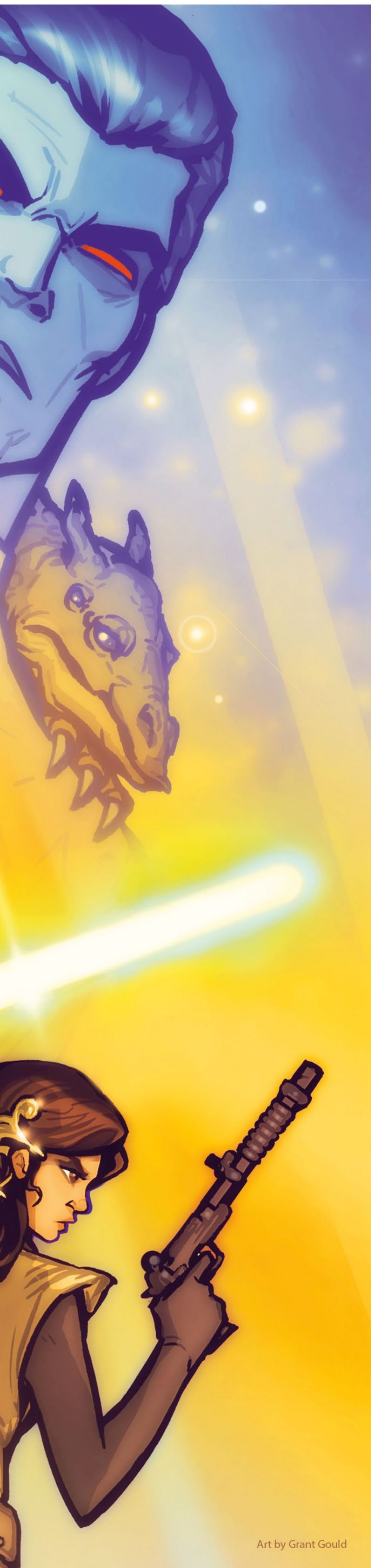


Desert Sands
was offered as
an exclusive
print at Star Wars
Celebration 2015
Anaheim through
Dark Ink Art and
Acme Archives



ANAHEIM  2015
STAR WARS
CELEBRATION

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GRANT GOULD

The prolific artist of “many thousands” of cards for Topps is still as big a fan as ever

Three years old when the first movie came out, Grant still remembers his dad taking him to see each movie on opening day, and his parents would buy him the action figures. “It was a massive part of my childhood,” he recalls, “and I’ve been a fan ever since. I’ve been doing freelance Star Wars work for both Topps and Lucasfilm now for over ten years, everything from cards to kids’ books to comics, and I still to this day have to occasionally pinch myself. I’m living my childhood dream! Star Wars still stirs something inside of me. It’s my childhood mythology. It’s a huge part of who I am.”

Star Wars has also been a large part of Grant’s working life. “My very first professional illustration job was a sketch card gig in 2005,” he explains, “drawing 1,000 sketch cards for the Topps Star Wars: Revenge of the Sith set. I was probably in way over my head, but it ended up being a crazy, great jumpstart for my freelance illustration career. It led to other, bigger jobs, so the sleepless nights were worth it.”

“In the years following, I did many more card sets, and many, many more sketch cards,” Grant continues. “I had a blast working

on the Clone Wars web-comics for StarWars.com a few years back, and I loved working on the kids’ books Draw Clone Wars and Draw Rebels for Klutz. I’ve been so lucky in that I’ve worked on several amazing Star Wars related projects. Luckily, the Star Wars universe has such a huge cast of characters, it’s almost impossible to run out of things to draw!”

Grant’s latest Celebration poster features some core characters. “I’ve always been a huge fan of Timothy Zahn’s Thrawn Trilogy,” the artist reveals. “When those books came out in the early ‘90s, it marked the end of a Star Wars dry spell. All my childhood heroes were back – Luke and R2-D2 and everyone else! It was momentous, and of course Thrawn himself is just the coolest villain. He was so calm and intelligent and thoughtful – very much the opposite of Vader. So I thought it’d be cool to pay tribute to those books, as well as the graphic novel adaptations of those books, which I also loved. It’s essentially my love letter to that series. The title The Legend of Thrawn,” he concludes, “is sort of a wink at the fact that now those books are called ‘Legends’ – that is, no longer canon.”

Grant is eloquent about his own emotional attachment to all the original characters. “I think for a lot

The Legend of Thrawn was Grant’s limited-edition print for Celebration 2015

Art by Grant Gould



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Grant drew 50 full-colour sketch cards for the Star Wars Masterwork set for Topps

of kids, Han Solo was the first true rebel or scoundrel that they got to know, the bad boy who lived by his own rules. Me, I was always a Luke Skywalker kid. I loved Luke. I felt a connection to Luke. He was sorta the dorky farm boy in the beginning, dreaming of bigger things, and I was a nerd in school who dreamt of bigger things. And then I grew with Luke over the course of the movies. We saw real change and development in those characters, and that's what really gives you that emotional connection and investment."

As an artist, Grant was inspired by some of the X-Men artists of the '80s, such as Arthur Adams and Marc Silvestri, plus Wendy and Richard Pini's ElfQuest series, and also the artwork of the Dungeons

& Dragons RPG. His own standard process for the past ten years, he reveals, has been to draw each piece by hand using pencil and marker ("Faber-Castell PITT brush pens are my favourites"), then scan the drawing in and colour it digitally in Photoshop.

"I'm actually kind of a dinosaur," Grant laughs, "because up until January of this year I still coloured everything with a mouse. I finally joined the 21st century and got a Cintiq a few months ago, so I've been teaching myself how to use it. It's still tricky for me getting used to actually drawing digitally instead of using pencil and pen, but I'm enjoying it quite a bit. As for sketch cards, which I used to draw a lot of earlier in my career but not so much in recent years,

I would colour those by hand using Prismacolor or Faber-Castell colour markers."

Unsurprisingly for such a fan, Grant is looking forward to more films in the acclaimed film series from the great mind of George Lucas. Actually, he says "I'm beyond excited. The idea of another new film that continues the stories – man, that's just amazing. I'm just excited about the whole thing. And, yes," he concludes, he's thrilled to see all of the new characters that will be introduced. "I have no doubt that they will be awesome and grab our imaginations and inspire artists new and old. It's a fantastic time to be a Star Wars fan!"

www.grantgould.blogspot.com





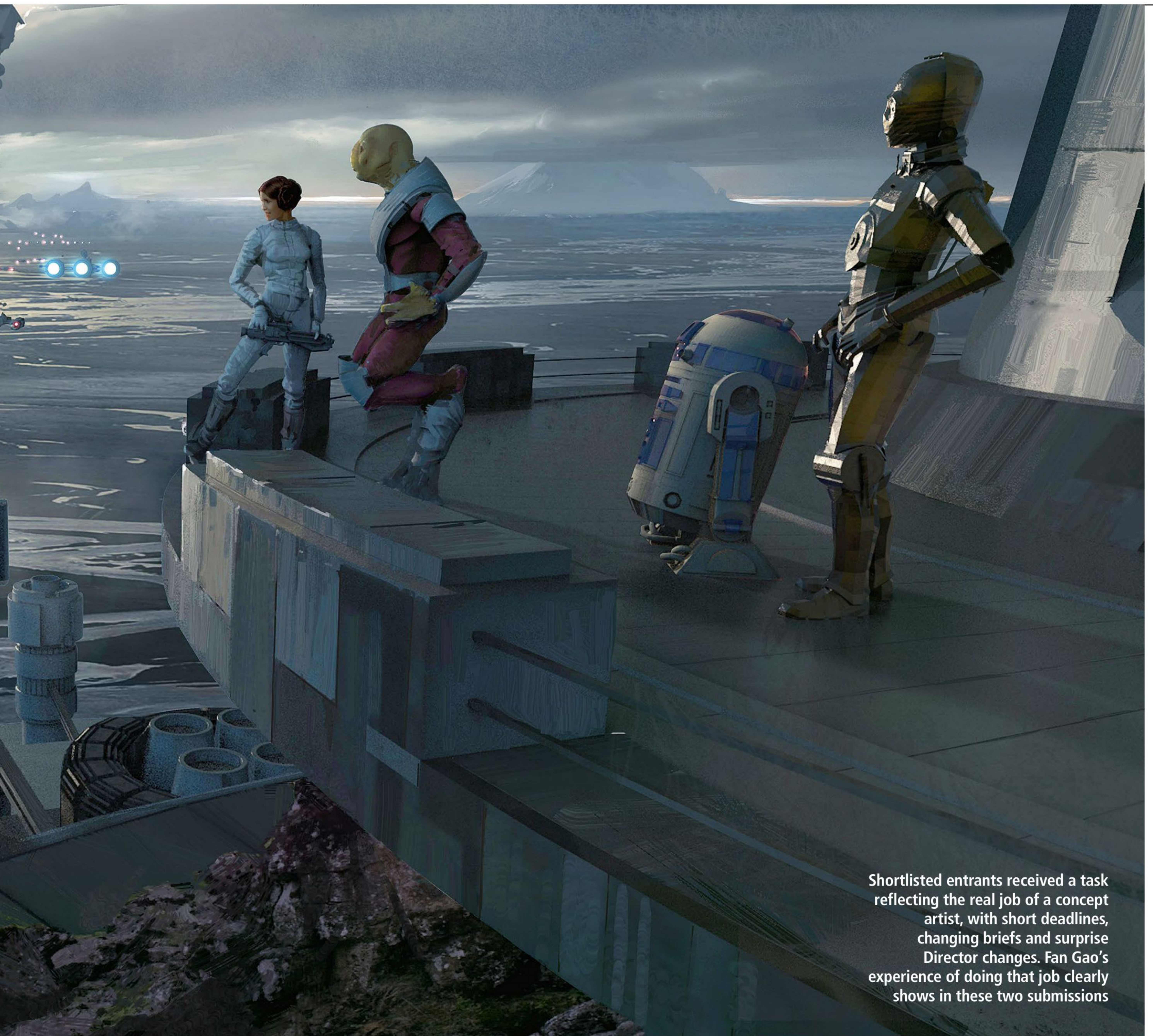
FAN GAO

The Chinese-born concept artist was a hit in the ILM Art Department Challenge

Concept artist and illustrator Fan Gao was born and raised in China, then moved to the US for school in 2010. He graduated from Art Center College of Design with honours in April. His work received Honourable Mention in the 2016 ILM Art Department Challenge (see page 12), so we spoke to him to find out more about his entry.

What do you do as a day job, and where are you based?

I am currently based in Los Angeles and working as a concept artist at One Pixel Brush. I specialise in environment design, architectural design, vehicle design and many other kinds of hard-



All images copyright © Lucasfilm Ltd./Disney

Shortlisted entrants received a task reflecting the real job of a concept artist, with short deadlines, changing briefs and surprise Director changes. Fan Gao's experience of doing that job clearly shows in these two submissions

surface design. In the past two years I've worked on some triple-A game projects including Destiny and the Call of Duty series. I also freelance for film projects and collaborate with production designer Alex McDowell.

When did you first hear about the ILM Art Department Challenge on ArtStation? Were you confident when you entered it?

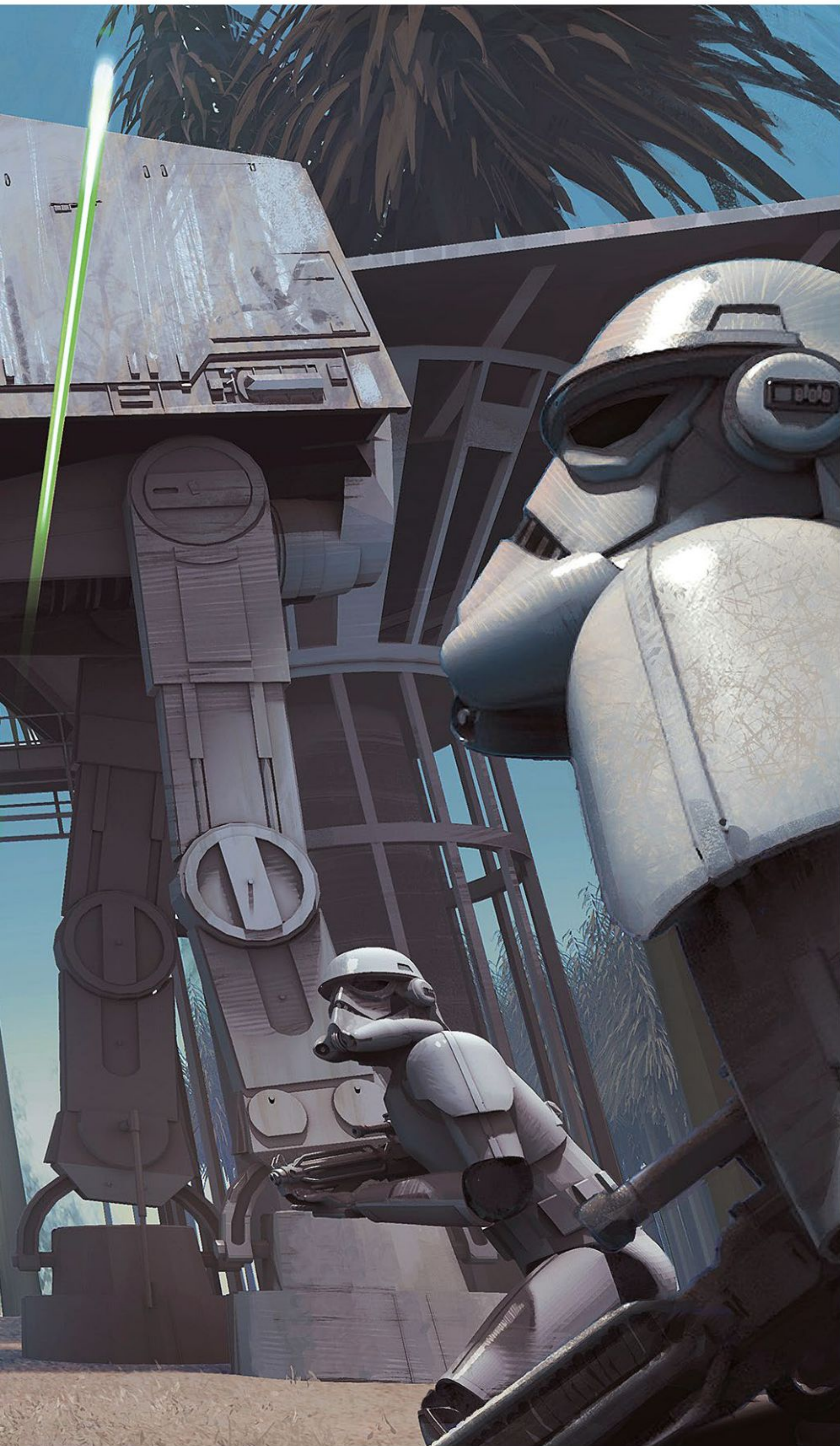
I heard about it two weeks before the end of the registration. And yes, I was confident I'd be among the winners!

You produced quite a lot of art for the Challenge... How did you choose what art to submit?

Composition and storytelling are the key elements I consider the







The first of the challenges was to create a new story moment set within the worlds of the original trilogy and using only existing vehicles, creatures and characters

“I have always wanted to capture the epic moments between Star Wars characters and the iconic vehicles and props, adding my own take”

most during my selection process. My goal is to balance those two aspects but also clearly depict the characters, the functionality of the vehicles, or the architecture that may be in the painting. For example, in my hoverbike chase scene [below left], I created a narrow space that was easy for the hoverbike to glide through but difficult for the AT-ST walkers. The hoverbike and character are easily turning around the building as the shooting scene is depicted, but note that in this space, the building is intentionally designed with cylindrical features to emphasise the ease of turning.

What feedback did you get, if any, from the ArtStation team and from the ILM panel of judges?

It was a privilege to have received feedback from the ILM Creative Director, David Nakabayashi, during the winner announcement video. He noted that my work was simplistic with great composition, not over-crowded, easy to read, and that I had understood the

brief. He also mentioned that he loved my vehicle design work and felt that any of the things I designed could have been in Star Wars Episodes 4, 5 and 6.

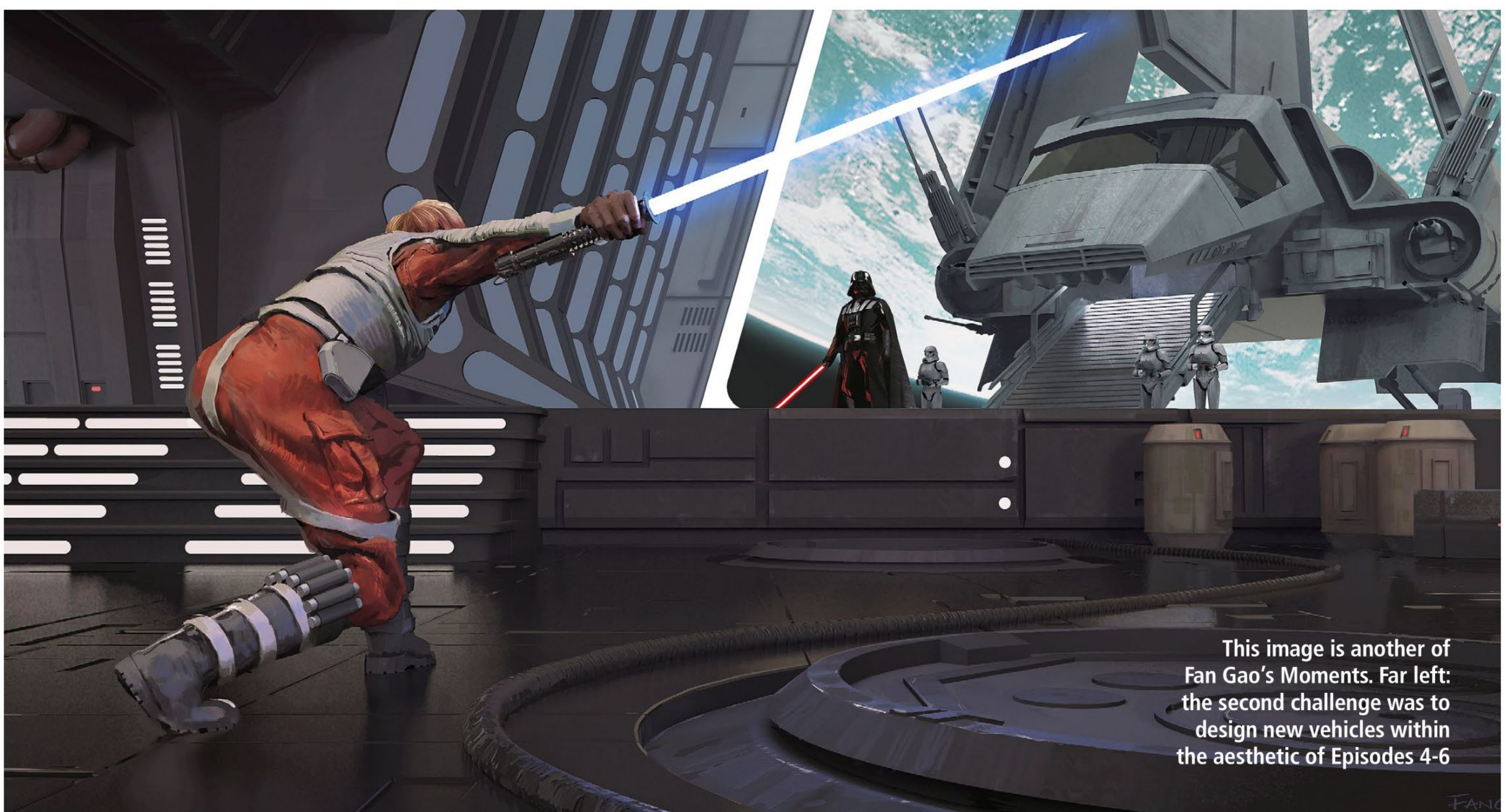
What is it about the Star Wars universe that you have tried to capture in your art?

I have always wanted to capture the epic moments between Star Wars characters and the iconic vehicles and props, or when they are in the architectural spaces, while adding my own take to make it unique and energetic in a different way.

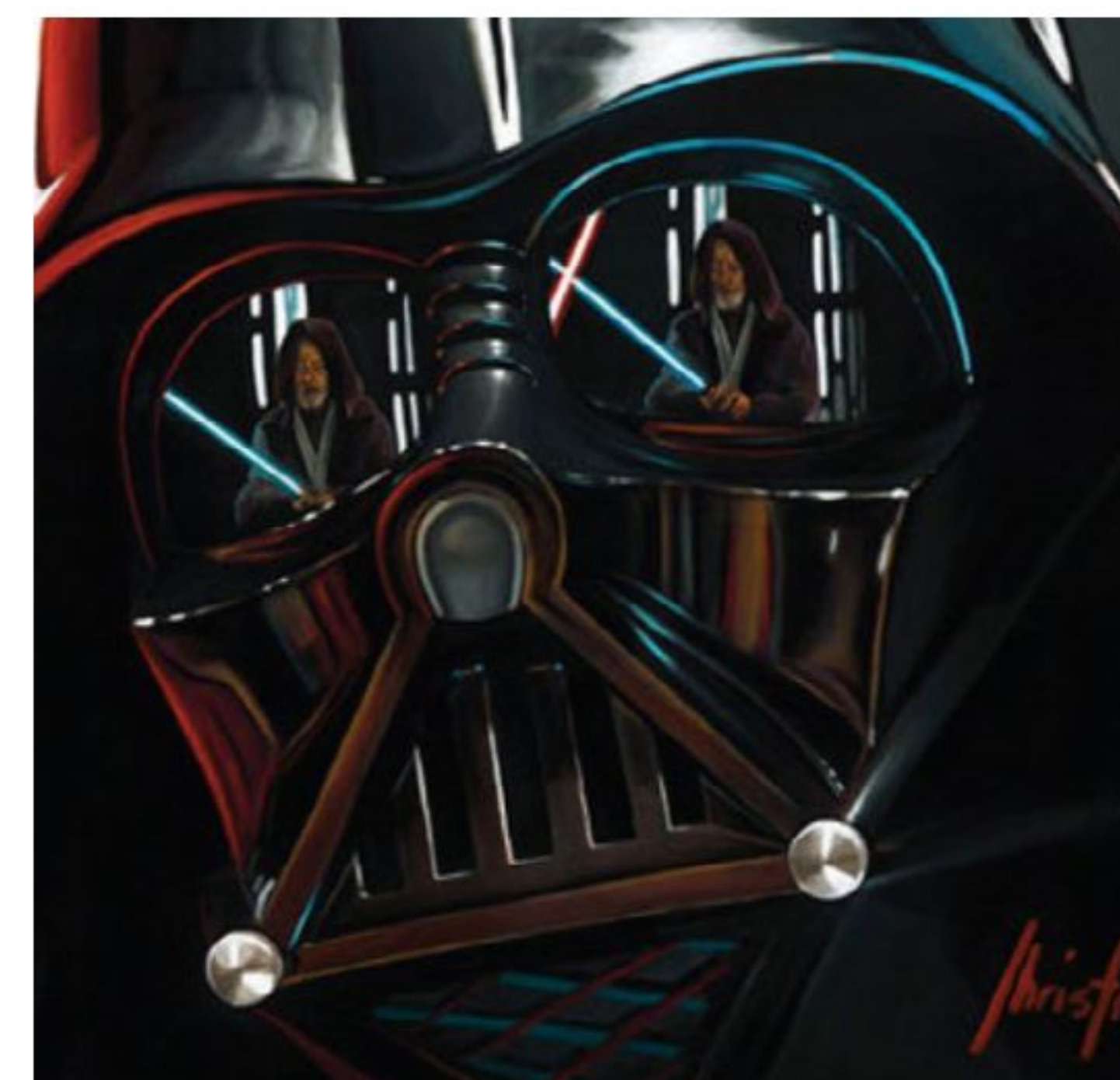
What do you learn from this style of competition? Is it as if you're doing the job of a concept artist?

I learned that storytelling probably is the most important thing in concept art. Sometimes a concept artist needs to sacrifice tight renderings, perfect compositions or minute details in order to tell a better story due to limited time.

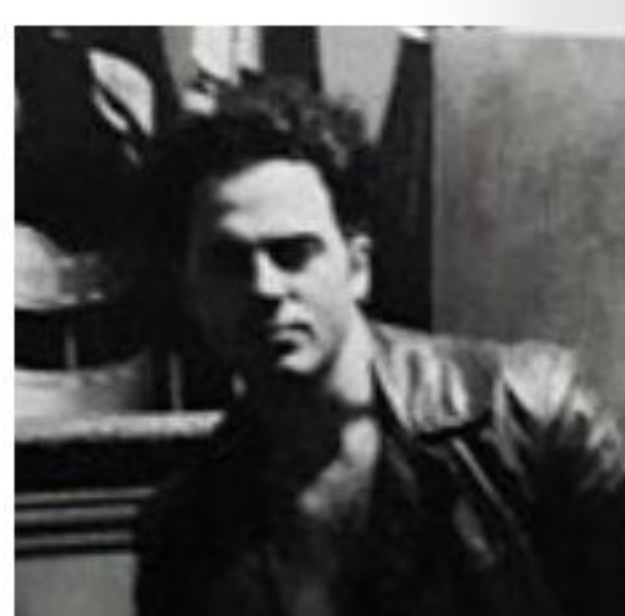
<http://bit.ly/fan-gao>



This image is another of Fan Gao's Moments. Far left: the second challenge was to design new vehicles within the aesthetic of Episodes 4-6



"Vader was the first painting I did for Lucasfilm. I didn't know it was going to change the rest of my life"



CHRISTIAN WAGGONER

The artist talks about his unique perspective on character portraits that reflect memorable scenes

Christian Waggoner has earned a reputation for his incredible portraits of the most famous Star Wars characters in unique compositions, but how do they come about? "The way I decide on composition and concept for a Star Wars painting is by the character," he explains. "What kind of features do they have? How big are the eyes? Do I need to zoom in or zoom out on the piece?"

Christian's process begins with a concept, which is then submitted to Lucasfilm for approval. "The most challenging Star Wars piece I've painted is Greedo," he adds, "just for all the scales and the intricacies of his face. But the funnest painting would be R2-D2 – it just came together so fast, so easy... effortless!"

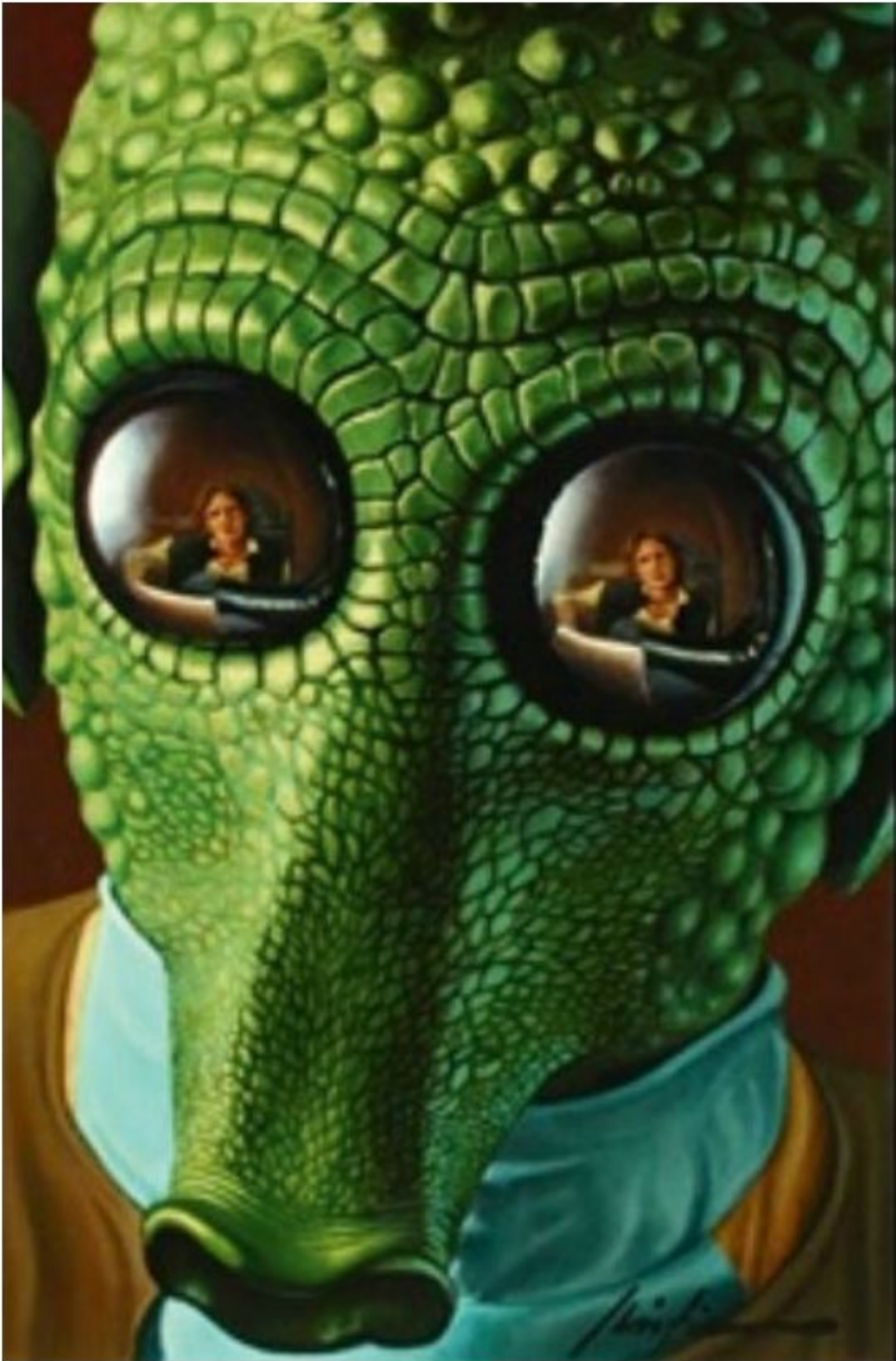
So what does Christian believe makes a good character design? "What I think makes a good space character design is movement in the mask, the intricate play of light and darkness," he says. "Or sometimes it's the ruggedness of someone like the Boba Fett character – sometimes it's how cool the character is that makes your design even better."

Christian's relationship with Lucasfilm began in 2007 at the New York Art Expo, where he was named one of the emerging trend-setting artists of the show. "People from Lucasfilm approached me and asked me if I would like to do a 30th anniversary piece of Darth Vader," explains the artist. "I was more than excited, as it came on my 36th birthday. When I did the first piece I thought it was a one-shot deal, but the Vader piece went over so well they asked me to do another one, then another one and another one."

Christian says he believes the Star Wars universe is still so popular because "all ages can relate: good and bad... Good overcomes evil..."

With Episode VII proving a hit, Christian is prepping to create new Star Wars paintings. "J.J. Abrams made all the characters better and even brought new ones in," says Christian. "I love seeing how the helmets will evolve through time, so I can basically redo all my characters and have a second calendar come out. Old meets new."

www.christianwaggonerartist.com





DOUG COWAN

A painter of landscapes and cards brings the two together

When the opportunity came to do a new Star Wars painting, Doug Cowan reveals, “I knew immediately that I wanted to do an image that was new but still familiar. I recalled Frank Tenney Johnson’s nocturnal paintings of the American West, and I felt that his depiction of life on the frontier shared a mood that I was searching for. Those paintings, along with Remington’s later works, portrayed many qualities that could be transposed successfully into the world of Star Wars. I depicted my own version of a rider on horseback, but this time as a Stormtrooper deployed on the edge of the universe.”

What is it about Star Wars that inspires artists to keep creating new work?

Star Wars is a captivating story, and the world it takes place in is varied and elaborate. There are many characters, stories, and settings to explore in what seems like an infinite number of ways. Each artist is able to approach these things from their unique perspective. Behind all of this is a lot of great artwork



and design done during the creation of it that also captures your imagination.

Do you have a favourite Star Wars artist or poster artist who has inspired you?

It's difficult to select an individual because there have been so many good artists who have worked on Star Wars. They come from diverse backgrounds too – comics, illustration, preproduction, fine art, among many others. Kazuhiko Sano's poster artwork for Return of the Jedi has appealed to me since I was very young and may be the earliest memory I have of Star Wars art.

Can you tell us a little about how you work? What is your process?

I paint oil on linen or panel, depending on the needs of each picture. I often do a small series of sketches in ink or watercolour until I have a refined idea of what I want to pursue. For my Outpost painting, I also did a scaled-down study in oil to address the colour and work out any details that I was still debating. When

“I depicted my own version of a frontier rider on horseback with the mood of the American West”

the time came to do the larger, final artwork, I blocked in the main elements of the composition with loose brushwork. When I felt everything was in place, I began painting in a very direct manner. I like to start with a portrait or critical area to guide me and give me confidence throughout the rest of the painting.

Do you approach your personal Star Wars work differently to commissioned art?

I approach all my paintings the same now, be it Star Wars or not, because I feel that this will allow me to do my best work and to employ the traits unique to me. If there is a difference between my Star Wars art and my other work, it will be during the sketching phase. I begin many of my other paintings without many or



“Topps asked me to reimagine the classic film poster art for Star Wars Illustrated: The Empire Strikes Back”



Bounty Hunter was created in oils on panel for Acme Archives

any sketches, but because most of my Star Wars art will be used by a client it is often necessary to convey an idea beforehand.

What makes great characters like Darth Vader or the Stormtroopers work?

I think it begins with how they are portrayed and fit into the story. These characters have lasted so long probably due to them being fascinating on several different levels. Darth Vader holds your attention and curiosity as a character, but also his appearance, sound, and even his musical themes contribute to his lasting legacy. Visually, he is a bold character to put into your artwork and has been the focus of many great works. This is true for many of the characters in Star Wars.

Are you a Star Wars fan?

I am a Star Wars fan and there has never been a time without it, having grown up after Return of the Jedi. I think being a fan has benefited me in that I can approach Star Wars subjects from an informed perspective, aware of the history and many subtleties found in the characters and locales.

Is it difficult painting imagined characters and scenes? How to you give them believability?

Every painting will have its own challenges whether you're working from life or imagination. I like to gather reference for as much as I can, even if it is not directly

“ The more understanding I can acquire of a subject or setting will help me make better choices ”

used. The more knowledge or understanding that I can acquire of the subject or setting will help me to make better choices. With Star Wars, I don't really have access to models or props, so the most difficult part is usually piecing all these elements from different sources together in what seems like a seamless image.

What was your latest Star Wars related project?

In 2015, I was hand-picked by Lucasfilm to be among a small group of artists selected to work on Topps' Star Wars: The Force Awakens trading card set. I contributed character sketches and did over 20 character paintings in oils.

Do you have any future projects you can reveal?

There are several upcoming trading card projects that I will likely contribute new artwork to, as well as an opportunity to create some limited-edition prints for both Star Wars and other properties. There is also another Star Wars Celebration on the horizon. I am busy continually painting on my own as well.

www.dougcowan.net



HUGH FLEMING

Inspired by the work of classic film poster artists, Hugh paints Rey and BB-8 from The Force Awakens

Hugh is an Australian artist whose Star Wars credits include covers for Dark Horse Comics and illustrations for Star Wars Insider magazine, where his popular Star Wars Rock Band art first appeared. This painting is a commission piece illustrating Rey and BB-8 from Episode VII.

“As a great movie buff and long-time fan of the great poster artists Drew Struzan and the late Richard

that montage affords. Elements can be juxtaposed in a figurative manner to convey a relationship between characters or get a sense of a world. You can have fun with a design without having to reconcile disparate lighting conditions of reference shots, or manage tricky perspective.

“A challenge here was to fashion a relatively singular composition from limited reference materials, while also trying to preempt choices likely to be made by other eager fan artists keen to express their enthusiasm for the new movie. My painting needs to stand out from the crowd.

“I also find it’s useful to combine reference into new combinations to keep things fresh. Rey’s head, for example, will be swapped out with another of superior resolution to create a unique pose.

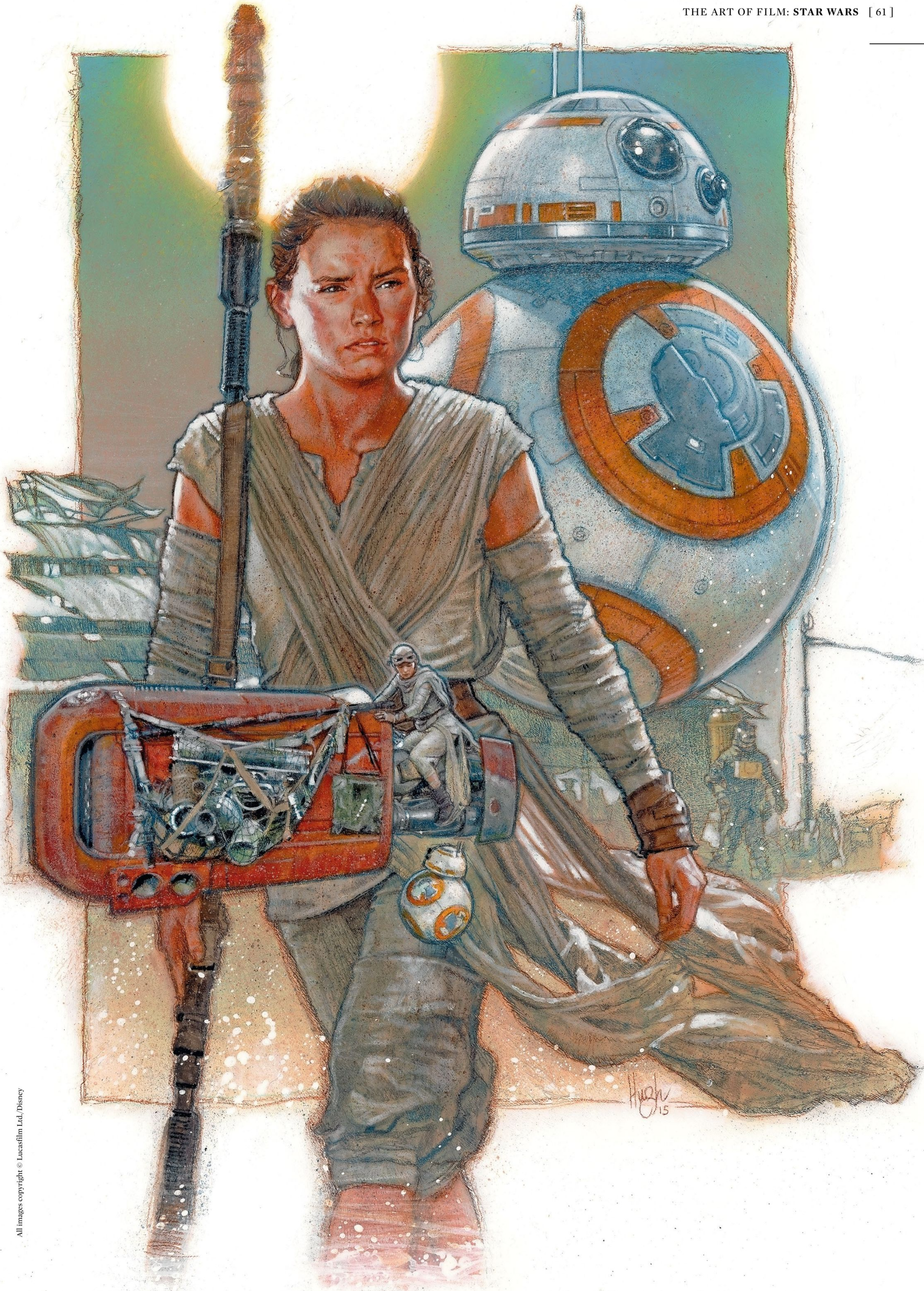
“I’m essentially self-taught and have had only minimal formal training as an illustrator,” reveals Hugh. “Consequently, I’ve lent on my intuition far more than I probably should have, and my technique has now settled into a perpetual argument between pencil and acrylics – each medium contradicting and correcting the mistakes of the other until a balance is achieved.”

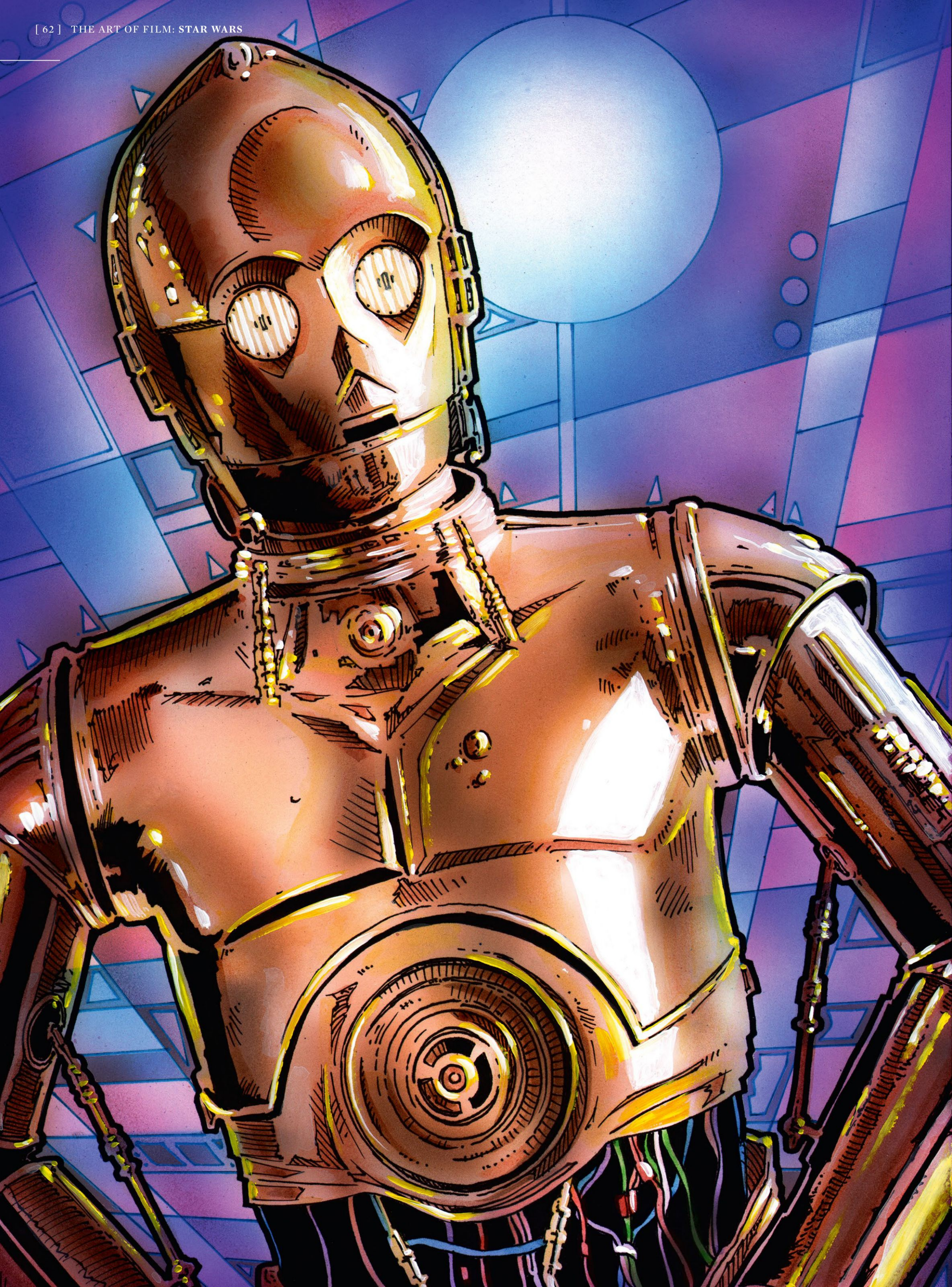
“Movie characters are the thing I love to paint the most. And of course I’m mad keen on Star Wars”

Amsel,” Hugh enthuses, “this is an ideal assignment for me. Like those two illustrators I’m a portrait artist at heart, and movie characters are the thing I love to paint the most. And, of course, I’m mad keen on Star Wars!”

At the time of this commission, The Force Awakens had yet to be released, so Hugh knew very little about how Rey and BB-8 are related within the narrative of the movie, but he was confident that pairing them in a montage was appropriate. “I like the flexibility

<http://ifxm.ag/hugh-fleming>





Matt's favourite
Star Wars art is
his poster for the
20th anniversary
of Dark Empire
from Dark Horse



MATT BUSCH

The talented artist shares his love of Star Wars and passion for unique illustration

Matt Busch is famed for his Star Wars art, including the cover of NY Times bestseller *Tales from the Empire* and nearly 400 pieces for the *You Can Draw Star Wars* book from Lucasfilm and DK Publishing. His most recent Star Wars related work is an art print created for the 2016 Star Wars Celebration Europe titled *Rey's Vision*, inspired by the awesome dream sequence when Rey first touches the Skywalker lightsaber in *Star Wars Episode VII: The Force Awakens*. It captures Rey's visions of past, present and future, all collected into an evocative montage.

What inspired *Encounter on Panna Prime*?

It's based on the first appearance of Boba Fett, in the *Star Wars Holiday Special* on TV in 1978. It's all pretty hard to watch (and was then), but the cartoon portion that included him was pretty cool, even by today's standards. So I thought

it would be fun to take an iconic scene from that and bring it to life, the way it might have looked if it was filmed live-action.

It was only a cartoon, which presented many challenges. There was no photo reference of a Panna Dragon whatsoever, let alone Fett riding one, or a

“Star Wars has inspired so many artists because its universe is so vast, there are no limits to the visuals”

Y-Wing Fighter floating in the water. This meant working with models and even sculpting my own Panna Dragon to get the lighting just right.

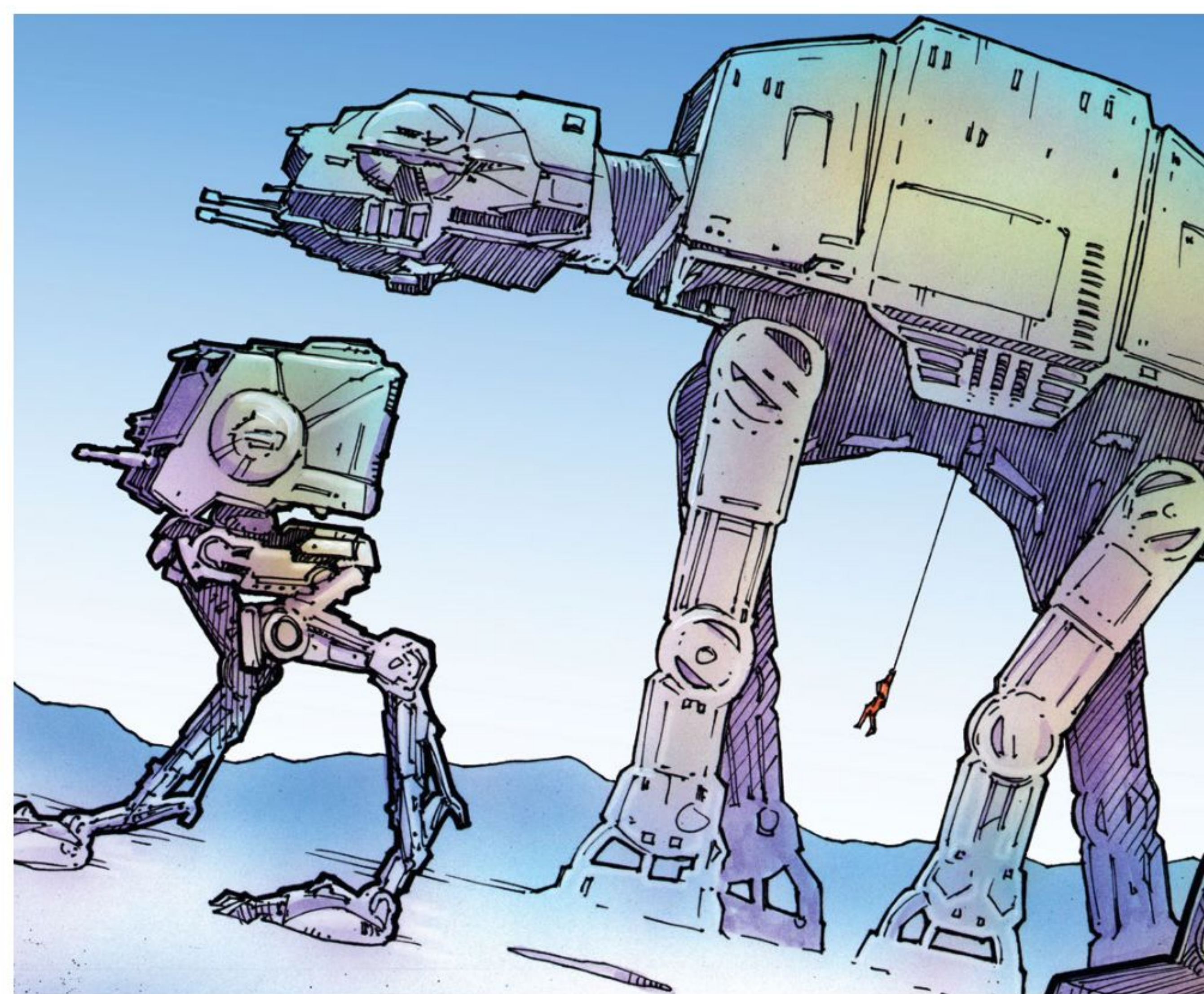
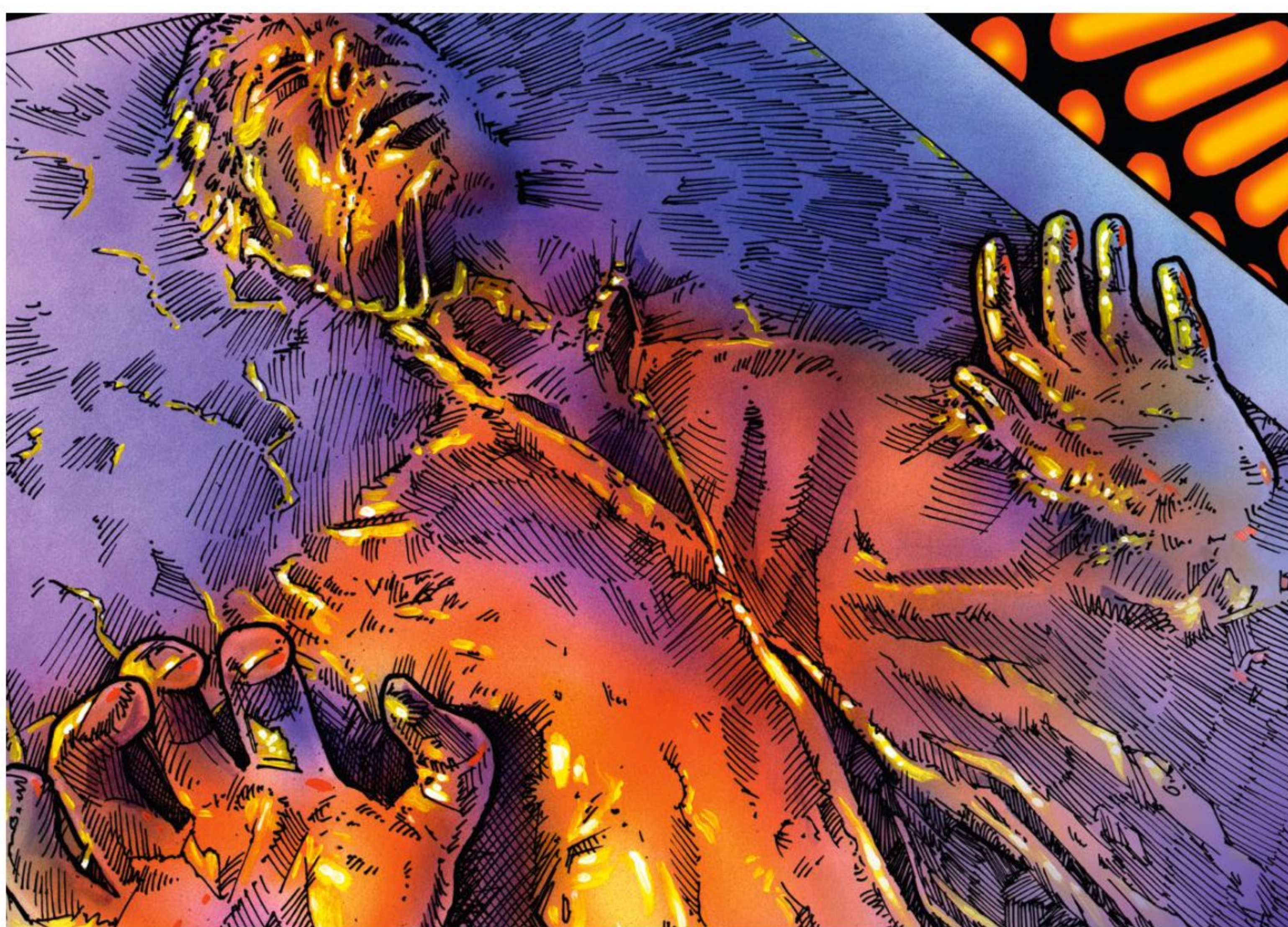
What is it about Star Wars that drives artists to create new work?

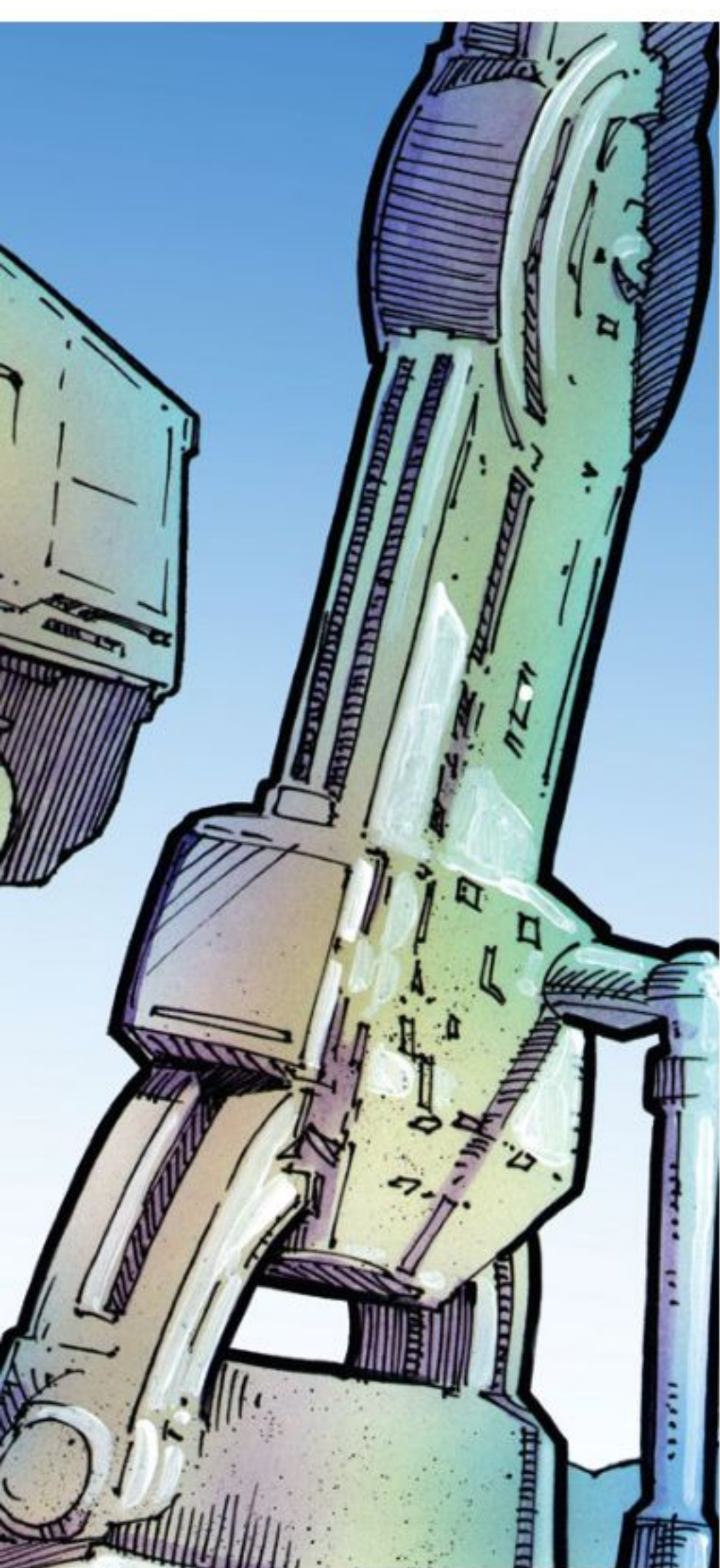


In my opinion, it's the imagination of it all. It's so vast in its worlds, from incredible locations, all kinds of characters and alien creatures, to the tech, vehicles, starships and weapons, there truly is nothing like it. Star Wars has inspired so many artists working today. I think part of the inspiration comes from how big the universe, or "playground" as I call it, is. There are no limits to the fantastical visuals.

Who has inspired you?

For a long time it was Drew Struzan, who is most famous for the iconic movie posters. But that inspiration was mostly due to his textured technique, which still inspires me today. However, as I get older, and moving into more concept art with my own creative endeavours, I'm finding so much inspiration in Ralph McQuarrie and Joe Johnston, who were the primary illustrators who designed the look of Star Wars and all of the characters, vehicles, and tech. They are the ones who really made Star Wars what it was and





Matt recreates some classic scenes, including these for the Star Wars Illustrated card series



the visual candy we all draw from today.

Tell us a bit about how you work...

I usually begin with an idea, and sometimes it's not even my own if Lucasfilm or one of the licensed companies has something specific in mind. I take that idea and begin to doodle it out visually, usually in a sketchbook. I like doing all of my prelim sketches and scribbles in a sketchbook to collect them all, otherwise on random scraps of paper they often get thrown away. A sketchbook keeps it all together, and it's fun to flip through and revisit the idea process later. I'll do several thumbnails trying to work out the best composition I can to make it dynamic and tell the story I want the image to convey.

From there, it's a hunt for photographic reference. My art is stylised and not completely photo-realistic, but it's realistic enough that any photos I can use for reference will help me with likeness, lighting, continuity, and just making it all look real – or at the very least, believable. This usually means digging through my collection of Star Wars books and reference files, but also searching online for something I might not already have. In some cases I'll use spaceship models and take my own reference to get the angles I need, and have friends come over to dress them up as characters and model certain poses for me.

Once I have the reference I need, I can finally begin on the actual art. I usually begin with pencil on illustration board. I often paint white acrylic gesso on it first to

give it a textured look that stays through the entire process. I prefer to draw with a lead holder (2B leads) so that the pencil never whittles down to a stump when sharpening. Basically I'm drawing exactly what I had in my chosen thumbnail sketch, but now am using the reference to make it more accurate and detailed.

Once it's completed, this step usually goes to the editors for approval. The approval process can take anywhere from days to

“I find it difficult to produce art digitally from scratch but I love running things through the digital mill”

weeks, so once I get the green light I'm pretty excited to finally move in to paint and bring the vision to life. My technique would appear to be traditional acrylics, but more and more the final result ends up being nearly half digital.

I begin the painting process with actual paint. I start with acrylic washes – just acrylics watered down to a watercolour-like consistency. Sometimes I'll break out an airbrush if I have large soft gradations in the sky or a glowing lightsaber. I then use opaque acrylics, which are the same ones only not watered down, for highlights or any edges that need to sharpen back up. Lastly, I'll use



Matt brings the notorious 1978 Star Wars Holiday Special to life in Encounter on Panna Prime





colour pencils to refine any details I wasn't able to get with the paint.

When the physical painting is complete, it's time to bring out the digital guns. To get it there, I either scan the painting in (usually in pieces and stitch together) or take a high-res photo. Adobe Photoshop is my weapon of choice. While I find it difficult to produce art from scratch digitally, I absolutely love taking something I've done by hand and running it through the digital mill to play

with and steer to the place I want it to be. Here I can fix mistakes pretty easily, but also test overall colour and contrast to really get the painting into the aesthetic atmosphere I originally intended. If the client demands any changes, these are done digitally as well.

Do you approach personal work differently to commissioned art?

I do! Anything I do for Lucasfilm or one of the licensees, I'm always trying to work with what exactly the client has in mind. They are the ones paying my bills, so I need to deliver. I may not always agree with the angle they're taking, but I let the ego go and try to give them the best I can.

In situations like the Star Wars Celebration Limited Edition Art Prints, I not only get to show my artsy side, but get to dive deep into the Star Wars lore and show an interpretation that the licensees might not have wanted to risk. I enjoy these opportunities because, for the most part, I get to run free.

What makes a great character like Darth Vader or Luke work?

There are so many reasons why the characters work, but since this is a visual magazine (not a writing or philosophy one) I'll stick with that. Many of the iconic Star Wars characters are faceless, like Darth

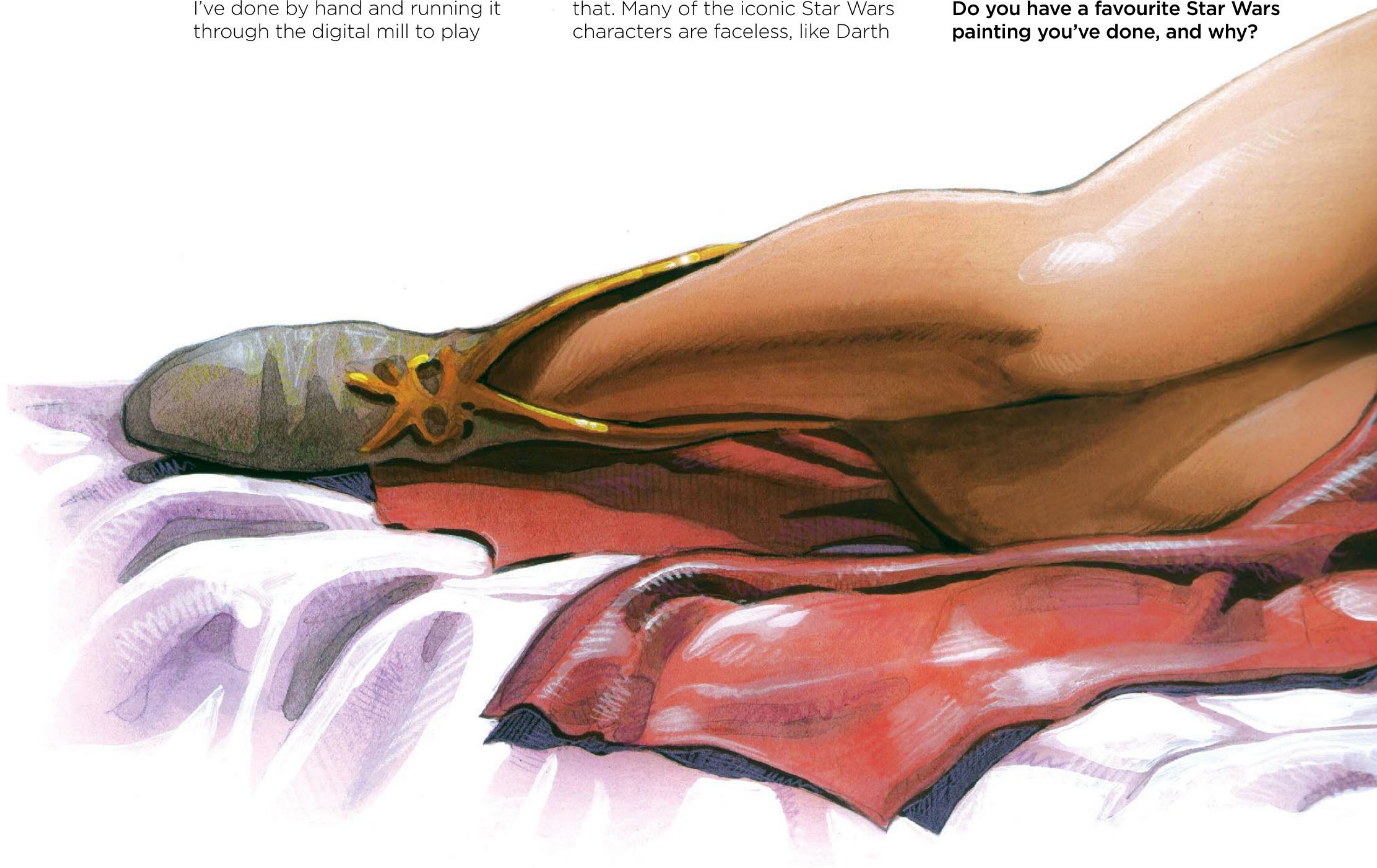
Vader, Boba Fett or even R2-D2. There's an intriguing mystery there that keeps the audience on their toes. It's one of the reasons why I believe the prequels weren't as strong: they revealed who's behind these masks. That immediately takes the mystery away.

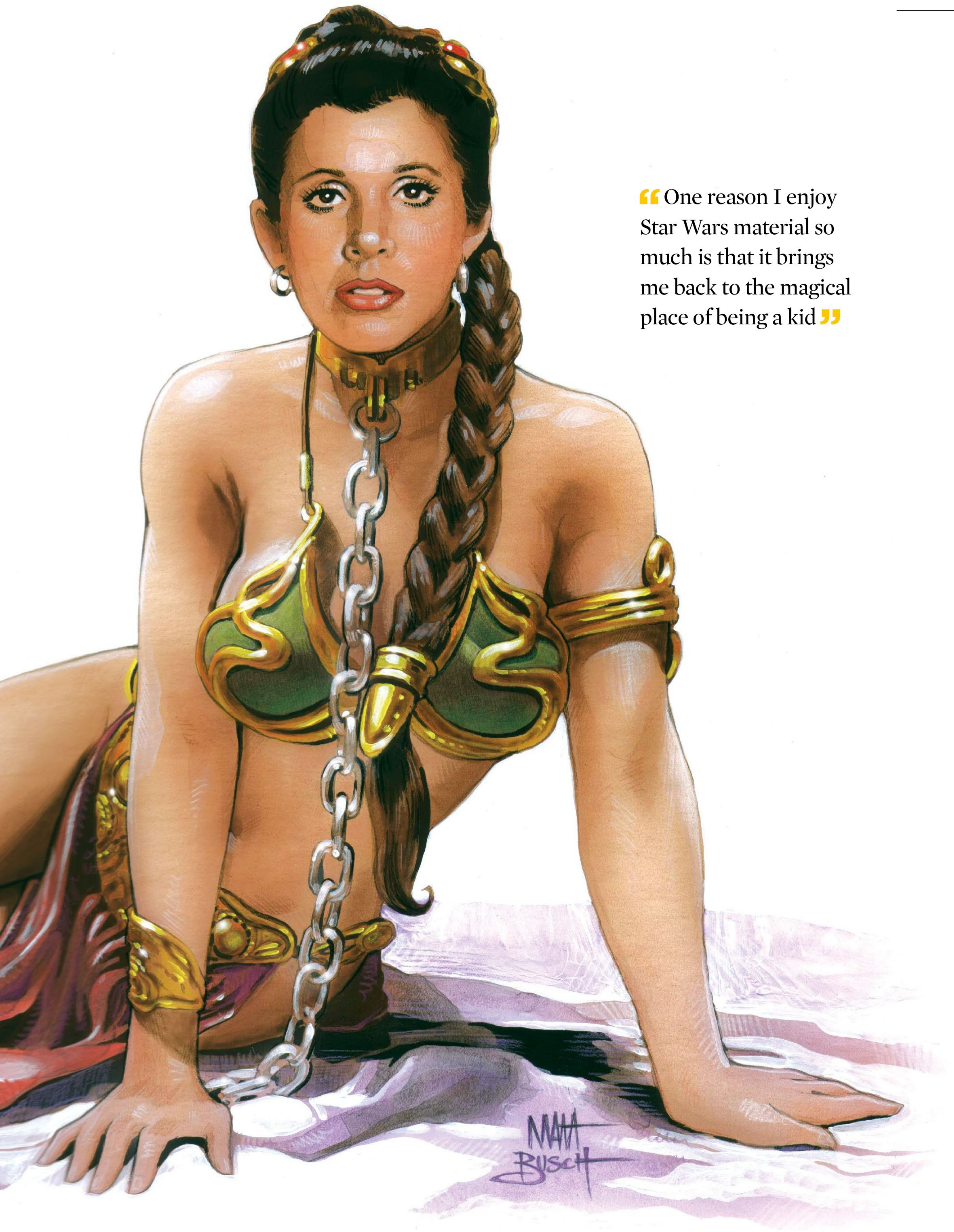
That said, the polar opposite of that would be Luke, who you also mentioned. Visually, especially in the first film, he appears to be the boy next door. He lives a bland life, but he's a dreamer. He's someone we all can relate to, and that's key. You want the audience to identify with your protagonist.

Are you a Star Wars fan?

I'm a huge Star Wars fan! The first movie came out when I was four, the perfect age for it to really explode my imagination, and the saga has evolved through the rest of my lifetime. One of the reasons I enjoy working on Star Wars material so much is because it really brings me back to that magical place of being a kid. That sense of wonderment is often lost with adults. Pablo Picasso once said that "The child is the true artist. The difficulty is figuring out how to stay an artist when growing up." I firmly believe that.

Do you have a favourite Star Wars painting you've done, and why?





“One reason I enjoy Star Wars material so much is that it brings me back to the magical place of being a kid”



Matt shared his vision of the Mos Eisley Cantina in this trading card from Topps' Star Wars Galaxy 5 series

© Topps & Lucasfilm Ltd

“My goal was never just to work for George Lucas, it was to become George Lucas, to make my own Star Wars”

At the moment, I'd say the poster I illustrated for the 20th Anniversary of the Dark Empire graphic novel is my favourite. For one, I really enjoyed that series as a fan, and it was really what kicked my butt into gear when I was trying to break in as a professional artist. But I'm also really proud of the composition and the colours. I feel it represents the tone of that comic series well.

Do you have any future projects you can reveal?

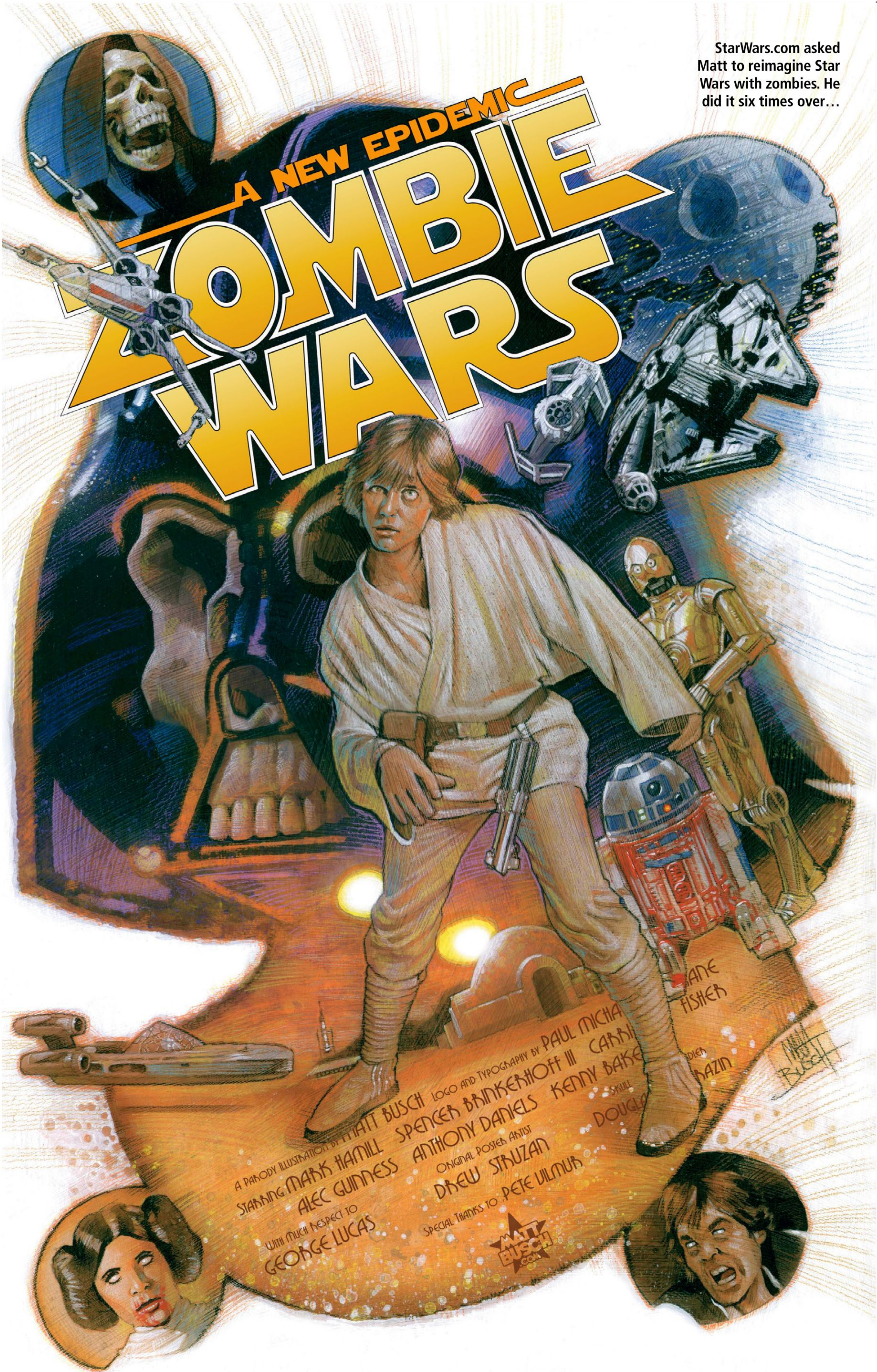
The big project I immerse myself in whenever I get the chance is my magnum opus: Aladdin 3477. It's a live action film based on the story of Aladdin but set 1,500 years in the future. I wrote the screenplay and I'm directing it currently. It's been a passion project of mine in the works for over 20 years, but it's really been moving forward in production in the last couple of years. It's coming out fantastic, but we have another year's worth of shooting, with a hopeful 2018 release.

In addition to writing and directing, I'm putting all of my skills to the test, so all of the concept art is mine, and I'm storyboarding each and every shot in the film. I'm designing everything about it, so for better or worse, the final product will be a look into my head! To be able to begin with concept paintings of how I want things to look and then see them come to life on camera, it's been such a thrill.

It's funny, working freelance for Lucasfilm, many people have suggested over the years why don't I just work at Lucasfilm for George Lucas? While working on Star Wars has been a dream come true, my overall goal was never just to work for George Lucas, it was to become George Lucas! I wanted to make my own Star Wars, so to speak. So the ability to work with friends and collaborate with other professionals to bring this vision to the screen... I'm having the time of my life!

www.mattbusch.com

StarWars.com asked Matt to reimagine Star Wars with zombies. He did it six times over...



A PARODY ILLUSTRATION BY MATT BUSCH LOGO AND TYPOGRAPHY BY PAUL MICHAEL
STARRING MARK HAMILL SPENCER BRINKERHOFF III CARRIE FISHER
ALEC GUINNESS ANTHONY DANIELS KENNY BAKER
WITH MUCH RESPECT TO ORIGINAL POSTER ARTIST
GEORGE LUCAS DREW STRUZAN
SPECIAL THANKS TO PETE VILMUR





MATT RHODES

The games concept artist captures all the fun and adventure of the classic trilogy



ne of the five entrants to receive Honourable Mention in the 2016 ILM Art Department

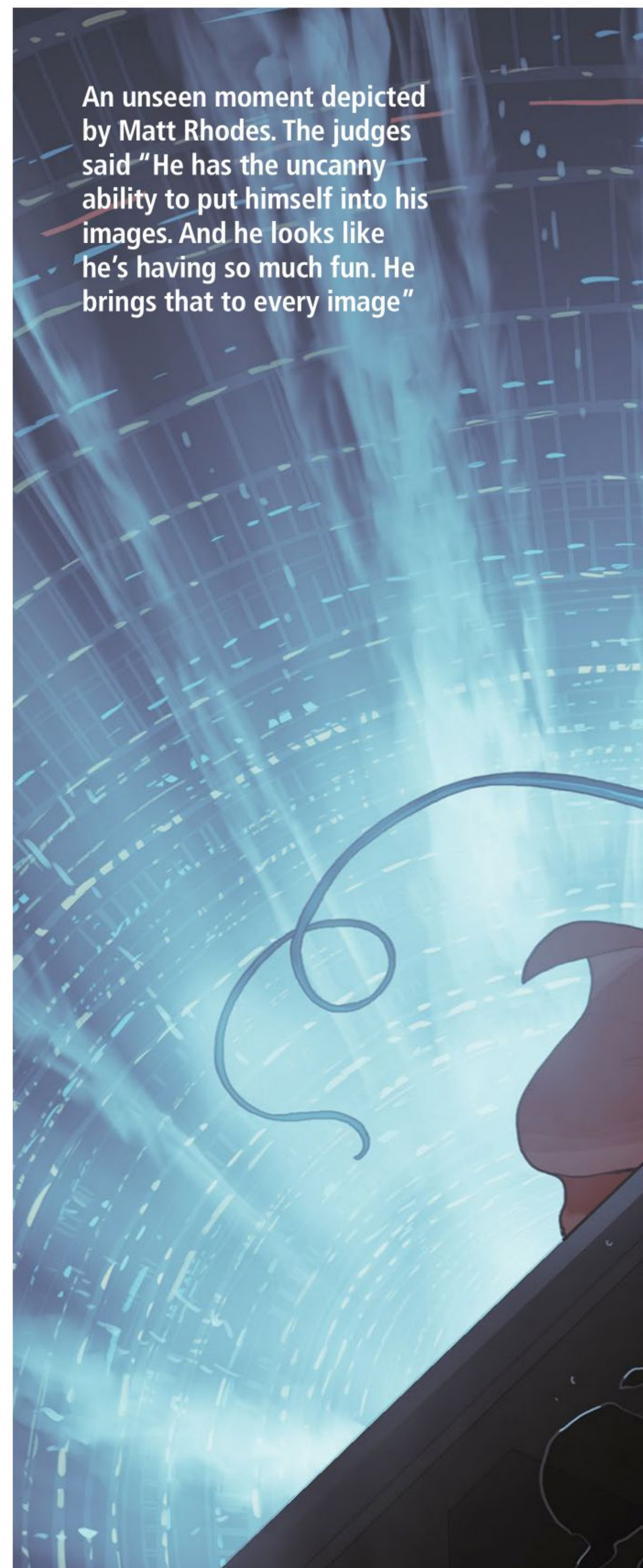
Challenge (see page 12), Matt Rhodes is a lead concept artist at the game developer Bioware in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

When did you first hear about the Challenge on ArtStation? Were you confident when you entered?

I was sitting at my tablet at home thinking "what should I draw next?", decided to take a break on ArtStation, and there it was! I was not confident when I entered. I visit ArtStation regularly - I know what kind of artistic alpha-predators swim in those waters.

It was hauntingly silent during the competition. Once or twice I got a "like" on one of my posts, but without context I didn't know if I should be thrilled or if hundreds of people were getting them too.

An unseen moment depicted by Matt Rhodes. The judges said "He has the uncanny ability to put himself into his images. And he looks like he's having so much fun. He brings that to every image"



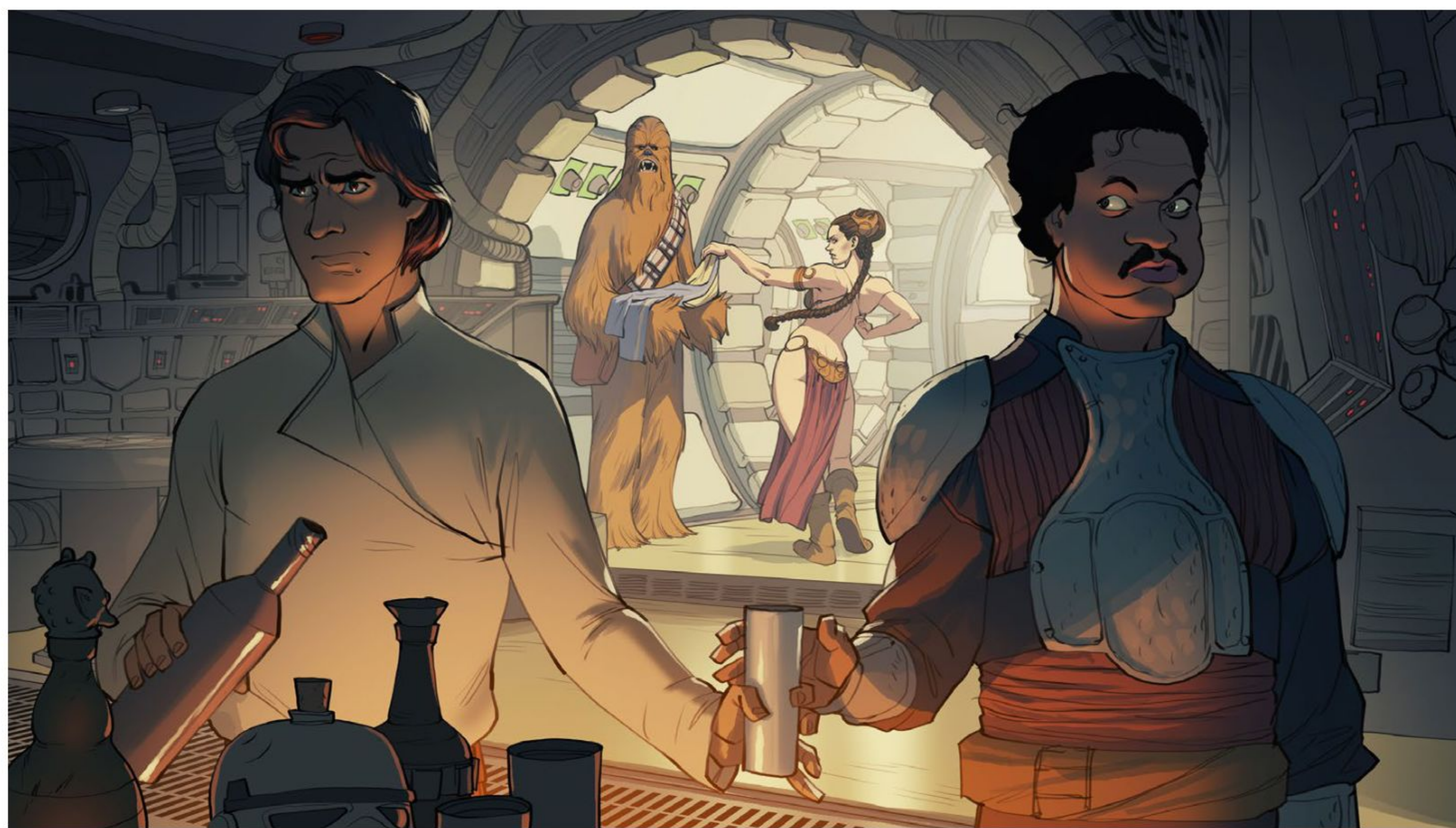


Another moment conceived by Matt: "Boba Fett is sent to Yavin to kill Mon Mothma but ultimately fails his mission when he underestimates her diplomatic prowess"





The Turtle: "I wanted to design a vehicle whose primary job was to showcase my favourite aspects of Star Wars: swashbuckling, peril, co-operation, and a dirty, lived-in world"



What is it about the Star Wars universe that you have tried to capture in your art?

I tried to capture what I love about Star Wars: the adventure, the fun, the storytelling. It's a wish-fulfilment IP, full of perils that heroes are always equipped to oppose if they believe in themselves and don't give up.

What did you learn from this style of competition?

I learned that the instincts I've had

for a couple years were correct: storytelling is the most important element of what we do as artists. It's a good thing to work on the grammar of art – things like anatomy, drapery, perspective, rendering, all of that – but they're just a tool, a means of telling a story. People have a tendency to confuse them as an end in themselves. An illustration without a story is a pretty boring thing.

<http://ifxm.ag/matt-rhodes>





All images © Fantasy Flight Games & Lucasfilm Ltd



TONY FOTI

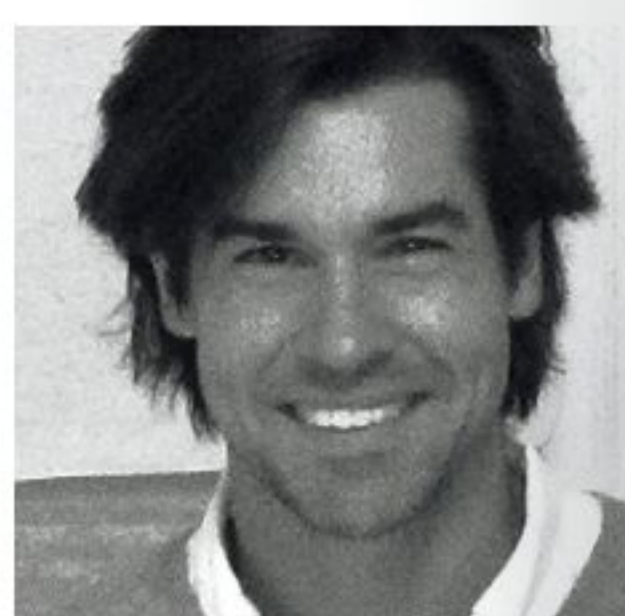
Taking influence from the old to create the new...

Artist Tony Foti has a longstanding working relationship with Star Wars, including designing some of the figures for Fantasy Flight's top-rated board game Star Wars: Imperial Assault. But it's the design of the original trilogy that has influenced his painting more generally. "I often wonder how much of the inspiration for Hoth (and making everything fairly white in and around Echo Base) in Empire Strikes Back was just so they could have Vader tear through it in that black armour," he says, referencing his own art (above).

In contrast to Vader, Luke Skywalker is surrounded by life in Tony's painting (top). "It wasn't until the colour study that I realised just how much green was going to be in this illustration," Tony notes, "at which point it sort of became the theme."

In Jedi Shadow (left) Tony's love of designing lightsabers shines: "I like to make sure every Jedi has a unique and interesting one!"

www.tonyfotiart.com



AARON McBRIDE



The visual effects director and prequel concept artist reveals his abiding affection for Star Wars

Art director Aaron McBride has worked on many blockbuster films of recent years, including Iron Man, The Avengers, and Pirates of the Caribbean. He also created art for the Star Wars prequels.

That was just one of the many stages on the journey of a lad who grew up in Mystic, Connecticut – despite the astonishing name, a pretty remote place that couldn't really fulfil young Aaron's thirst for movie magic. "There wasn't much access there," he recalls. "There was maybe just one comic book store you had to drive quite a ways to. I grew up pre-internet, pre-Facebook, so you didn't really see a lot of concept art for movies.

The only thing that was out there was the Art of Star Wars stuff. That really got me going, but I was wondering how to do that. It seemed so far away from where I was growing up and the academic subjects I was doing."

But Aaron was nothing if not tenacious, and while still studying at school he made it his mission to discover as much about this tantalising world as possible. "I would try to find out where the artists that I liked went to school, or where the directors that I liked studied. And so I applied to go to a lot of those schools, but they were mostly film schools and I realised what I liked most was drawing and painting, so I ended up going to Rhode Island School of Design."

Star Wars Sentry Droid was commissioned work for ImagineFX magazine. "I designed a droid that serves as a large sentry – somewhere between a Stormtrooper and an AT-ST walker. It's a mobile heavy artillery platform that would support the Empire's equivalent of the Navy Seals or an Imperial 'black ops' team on military incursions"



Cover art for the book *Lords of the Sith* by Paul S. Kemp, one of the first entries in the new canon begun by Disney



Aaron painted the cover art for *Twilight Company*, a novel by Alexander Freed, inspired by EA's hugely anticipated *Star Wars Battlefront* game. "I think a lot of being prolific is being a good editor and knowing where to put your detail and where the audience is not going to look"





Dooku and Asajj Ventress:
“I tried to make her body
language very flirtatious
toward Dooku, as if she’s
trying to get on his radar.
Dooku in response is
indifferent, as he simply
sees her as a means to
goad Anakin”

Old Wounds:
Aaron wrote and
illustrated this story for
Star Wars Visionaries,
a collection of concept
artists' work

His parents were supportive but not in an indulgent way. Aaron remembers: "My dad always said, 'If you want to be an artist, you're going to work at it as hard as your sister works in medical school studying to be a doctor'."

Once in the design industry, his big leap, from production assistant to concept artist, came on the film that everyone in the industry wanted to work on: Star Wars Episode I. "I was working a lot for David Nakabayashi," Aaron says, "and on Episode I he would throw me little artistic assignments to do after hours. 'Here's a storyboard for Episode I. Here's a matte painting. Do a concept for this.'"

"So it was funny: because I was a production assistant, the pressure wasn't on. The pressure

“ Growing up, I'd heard stories about how Vader had fallen into a volcano... This is that scene they've been talking about! ”

was on me to impress him, but he'd give me lower priority stuff in case it didn't work out."

Of course it did work out, and since then, Aaron has worked on a mightily impressive range of films: *Minority Report*, *Rango*, the *Pirates of the Caribbean* franchise... many more. "The *Avengers* was a lot of fun – I got to design the Leviathan that the Hulk punches," he beams. "I was always a huge fan of the Hulk. When I was young my mom would only allow me to watch an hour of TV a week, so I used that hour every week to watch the Lou Ferrigno Hulk TV show."

Star Wars, of course, remains a favourite for Aaron. He worked on Episodes I to III, and while he's reluctant to talk about the critical reaction they received at the time, he's in no doubt about how much he learnt working on the prequels and what enormous fun it was.



"Growing up, I'd heard all these stories of what people thought of the way Obi-Wan Kenobi and Darth Vader had fought. It was explained in interviews about how Vader had fallen into a volcano or he had been burnt somehow. That's why he looked as he did under the black armour. When you're kids that's almost like heresy. You kind of theorise with your friends and you're not quite sure what's canon and what's not.

"I was one of the art directors on

the battle on Mustafar, which was the lava planet in *Revenge of the Sith*. So I was really excited to work on that: 'Oh, this is the scene everyone has been talking about!' It was a thrill. I got to work with a lot of the guys in the model shop who had worked on the original trilogy, including Steve Gawley and Lorne Peterson. He sculpted the asteroid that the *Millennium Falcon* hides on in *Empire!*"

www.aaronmcbridestudio.com



Sean's expertise in rendering weaponry for games certainly shows in this Scout Speeder from Return of the Jedi



SEAN MARINO

In the hands of a specialist artist, the unforgettable speeder bike leaps to life

Sean is a 3D artist at Riot Games and served as Vehicle & Weapon Artist on Sledgehammer Games' Call of Duty: Advanced Warfare. He worked on this amazingly realistic render for two hours each day for about two months using Maya and ZBrush for modelling, Substance Painter to texture, Marmoset to render and Photoshop for compositing and post work.

"This was the first time in a long time I had created anything in the Star Wars universe, and that made me very happy all by itself," Sean says. "I had immersed myself in Star Wars (books, shows, films, games, etc) during the creation of this asset, and it just brought back so many good memories, especially any time I'd watch the scene in Return of the Jedi featuring these speeder bikes."

www.marino.artstation.com



STEPHEN HAYFORD

Why simply paint or draw a scene when
you can genuinely re-create it... to scale?



Labor Day, Endor depicts Stormtroopers as you've probably never seen them

M

any artists enjoyed Star Wars figures in their youth, and some still use them for reference. But

not many use them in their artwork in quite the way that Stephen Hayford does...

Is your art based on a childhood love of Star Wars figures?

Yes, without a doubt. In 1978, when I first had Star Wars figures in my grubby little mitts, I was inspired to re-create the scenes I had seen on the big screen. This hadn't happened with me with other toys. And it soon turned into creating stories based on those characters, based on their personalities, grounded in environments that were plausible in their galaxy. So, at six years old, I was unwittingly creating fan fiction in my playtime.

That fascination with visual storytelling stuck with me. And in my teens, when it ran into my sense of idealism, my love of photojournalism was born.

In my journalism career I covered many dark stories, from murder to horrible accidents to parents losing their children to illness. I turned back to my childhood love of Star Wars action figures as an escape at the end of the day. Creating new figures, customising existing figures into characters that hadn't been made, was my catharsis. That quickly evolved into creating dioramas of full scenes (starting with the cantina).

With my experience in photojournalism, it made sense for me to photograph my creations. I posted them online through www.rebelscum.com, and it suddenly found a following.

So, my art is not just an extension of my childhood love of Star Wars figures, it's a direct full-circle swing to my visual storytelling roots.

Where do you get the figures you use? Are they handmade or actual old toys?

It all depends on what I'm working on. Generally, when I work on

“In journalism I covered many dark stories. I turned back to action figures as an escape and catharsis”



Stephen loves using faceless figures – pose and body language have to say it all



Stephen Hayford



licensed properties, I use the action figures that exist for that movie. I usually use Star Wars figures right out of the package. If it's a property that doesn't have action figures in my preferred scale of 3.75-inches (for example, *The Big Lebowski*), I will customise figures like I do for my personal work. When I create personal work, like my Florida-themed satire, I mix parts of several action figures, re-sculpt clothing and facial features, and re-paint them to look more like everyday people.

What's your general process? Is it always the same for every work?

My process always starts with visual reference material. I examine lots of film stills or behind-the-scenes photos. I take lots of photos of objects I want to re-create. Then it's on to design of props and structures. That happens both in sketches and on computer. My final compositions are largely worked out in this design stage. My ideas for the composition usually guide the design.

Design leads to the cutting of pieces, by hand or by laser cutter. Then comes construction, followed by shaping to make the parts come together seamlessly. There are also lots of other applications that take place based on the

environment I'm creating. It could involve plaster, wood shavings, baking soda, sand, etc.

Painting is always the last step of the physical creations. But there are many applications of paint: primer, base coat, tone, detail and weathering. Many colours and techniques are involved.

Then the actual staging of characters and set pieces takes place for the photography. Photography generally lasts a few hours, with many different light treatments at different focal points. Then finally, those images come together in post-production.

Which characters lend themselves best to these scenes?

I love finding ways to work with *all* characters. But I will admit that I find the most humour in the expressionless sculpts of characters with masks or helmets. For example, I love working with Stormtroopers because of the challenge of expressing their feelings with body language instead of facial gestures.

Have you experimented with 3D printing at all?

I have used 3D printing and prefer other methods. Even good quality 3D printers leave striations in the sculpt because of the layering of the medium. That requires me

“I love working with Stormtroopers because of the challenge of expressing feelings with body language”



Model work demands
careful lighting and close
attention to every detail





to do a tremendous amount of finishing work (sanding, filling, and so on), which costs me more time. It's much easier for me to assemble the pieces I want or sculpt from scratch.

How long would one scene take to set up, light and photograph?

What I do can't be done without a truckload of patience. From the fragility of construction to the painstaking task of setup, patience is required most of all. Setting up the figures and props on the scene takes more than hour in most cases. It's not as simple as setting up the items so they look good together, you have to constantly get behind the camera to see how the lens sees the items. Everything looks different through the compression of a lens. So, all characters have to be arranged to look good through the lens without competition from background elements or oddly placed lines, etc.

And then when you have everything set perfectly, one of your actors (the action figure) decides to fall over. Or worse, he decides to fall over and take out everyone else at the same time. (The Domino Effect.) It can be very frustrating.

Lighting a set takes just as much patience because when you shoot

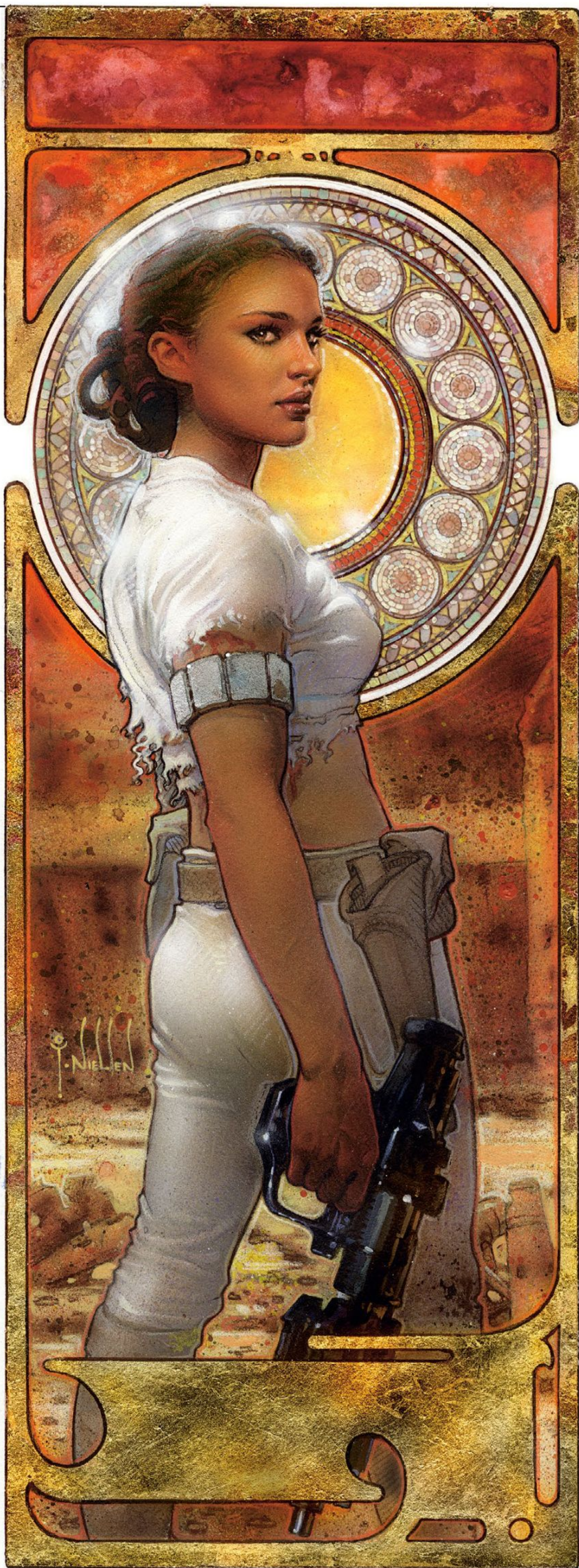
at a small scale, movement of a light five millimeters can make a gigantic difference.

But it's a frustration I wouldn't trade for anything in the world. You can't beat making a living playing with toys!

Do you have a favourite Star Wars artwork you've created and why?

That's always a difficult question to answer. I almost always love the last piece I created. But then I also have images that I'm fond of forever. And there are others that I love most because of the story behind the image. For example, my recent Hoth image for a Hasbro / Toys R Us poster utilised a large 8-foot by 8-foot diorama with 70 pounds of baking soda. I also used a fog machine to create background atmospherics while using a fan to blow baking soda into snow flurries. I photographed this monstrous set in my mother's garage. At the end of several takes, there was a huge cloud of fog and baking soda in the air. I opened the garage door and this cloud billowed out into the driveway. It looked like a Cheech and Chong movie. I couldn't help but wonder what the neighbours were thinking of the grandmother next door!

“What I do can't be done without a load of patience but you can't beat making a living playing with toys!”



Padme Amidala: Celebration IV limited print. "A hats-off, deep bow to my greatest inspiration and influence, Alphonse Mucha. His elegant draftsmanship, reasons for making art, and rich, symbolic layers will always be part of me"

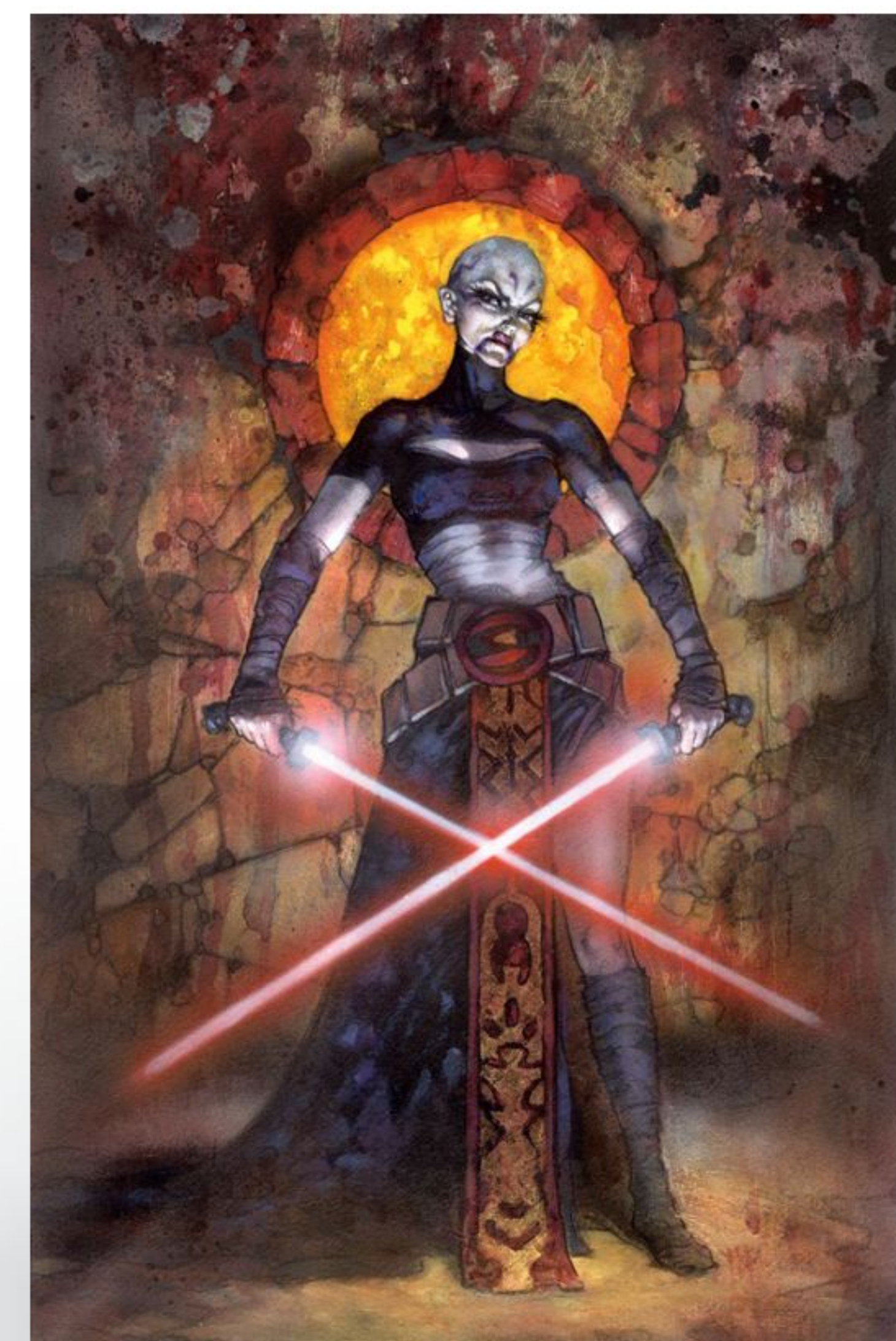


TERESE NIELSEN

Star Wars remains a favourite for the renowned trading card and cover artist

Terese Nielsen is a name immediately recognisable in fantasy art. She's a painter and mixed-media artist known for trading card artwork for the likes of Magic: The Gathering and Harry Potter, and of course Star Wars art. She hails from Aurora, Nebraska, which she describes as "a teeny-tiny farming town", so it's tempting to draw comparisons between Terese and another ambitious young farmhand on a planet far, far away...

"We didn't have computers or cell phones, and video games were barely beginning to happen, so there wasn't anything to do! I would stay home and draw." She, her twin brother and their older



"I'm not up on all of the Extended Universe characters, Asajj Ventress included, but it didn't take long to figure out she's a powerful, sinister character. A menacing female with two lightsabers gave me something a little different to play with"

brother, now fellow fantasy artist Ron Spencer, felt supported and encouraged. Studying art at college in Idaho, and then Pasadena, where she graduated with distinction, set her on the right track. "Once qualified, you have the basics to springboard into any direction you want, with a solid grounding in all the core principles that matter," she says.

Terese was, above all, inspired by the artists whose work she hungrily consumed from the early days. "My first art crush was totally Boris Vallejo," she reveals. "I just loved the way he painted, and still do – the musculature and the vibrant colour, his skin tones – I just couldn't imagine that was possible to do with a paintbrush. I like Frank Frazetta, but some





of the ways he depicted women stuck in my craw. I remember even as a young girl feeling Boris' work was much more empowering with the type of women he painted. I wanted to relate to those women."

Her break came with trading cards, then other art for Marvel, including the dystopian Ruins working alongside her then-husband Cliff Nielsen. But it was Magic: The Gathering that really put Terese on another level, giving far more scope for her passions: mixed media painting, hiding myriad symbols and odd effects. Trying out different effects in her painting – throwing in leaves or arcane symbols – is one of Terese's trademarks. "I'm not really sure I could explain it," she admits: "I just love it, like old books and symbols and sacred geometries. Somehow it all wants to be in there..."

And what about Star Wars? "My very first Star Wars job was early on, like 20 years ago. For Star Wars Galaxy magazine, I was contacted to do a painting of Lando Calrissian. Then Dark Horse Comics asked me to do comic and book covers for them.

"Several years later, I did some packaging illustrations for the Star Wars miniatures, which was like 24 different paintings just for those. That was my favourite, because you could just focus on a single character for each design, and get into the mind of that character. That's the fun part to me."

Her all-time favourite? She laughs: "My favourite fantasy world is probably my life."

Leia Solo Jedi Knight:
an unusual take on Leia,
done as packaging art for
Star Wars Miniatures



Leia Boushh: Imperial Entanglements. "I was grateful this Leia commission didn't require the doughnut-buns hairstyle. I was going for an 'I got this' look"



Taking a year-and-a-half to develop, Jar Jar Binks is the highest-profile character Terry Whitlatch created for *The Phantom Menace*. His anatomy was based on elements from duck-billed dinosaurs, emu and parrot fish



TERRYL WHITLATCH

The character artist on *Star Wars* Episode I gives us an insight into what goes into creature design

Terry Whitlatch trained as a scientific illustrator before a lucky meeting led her to work on George Lucas's game *The Dig*, and one thing led to another. "As a paleo-reconstructionist, which is my training and speciality, working on the *Star Wars* prequels was a perfect fit because I had to design imaginary creatures that were biologically believable," she explains. "Designing creatures for

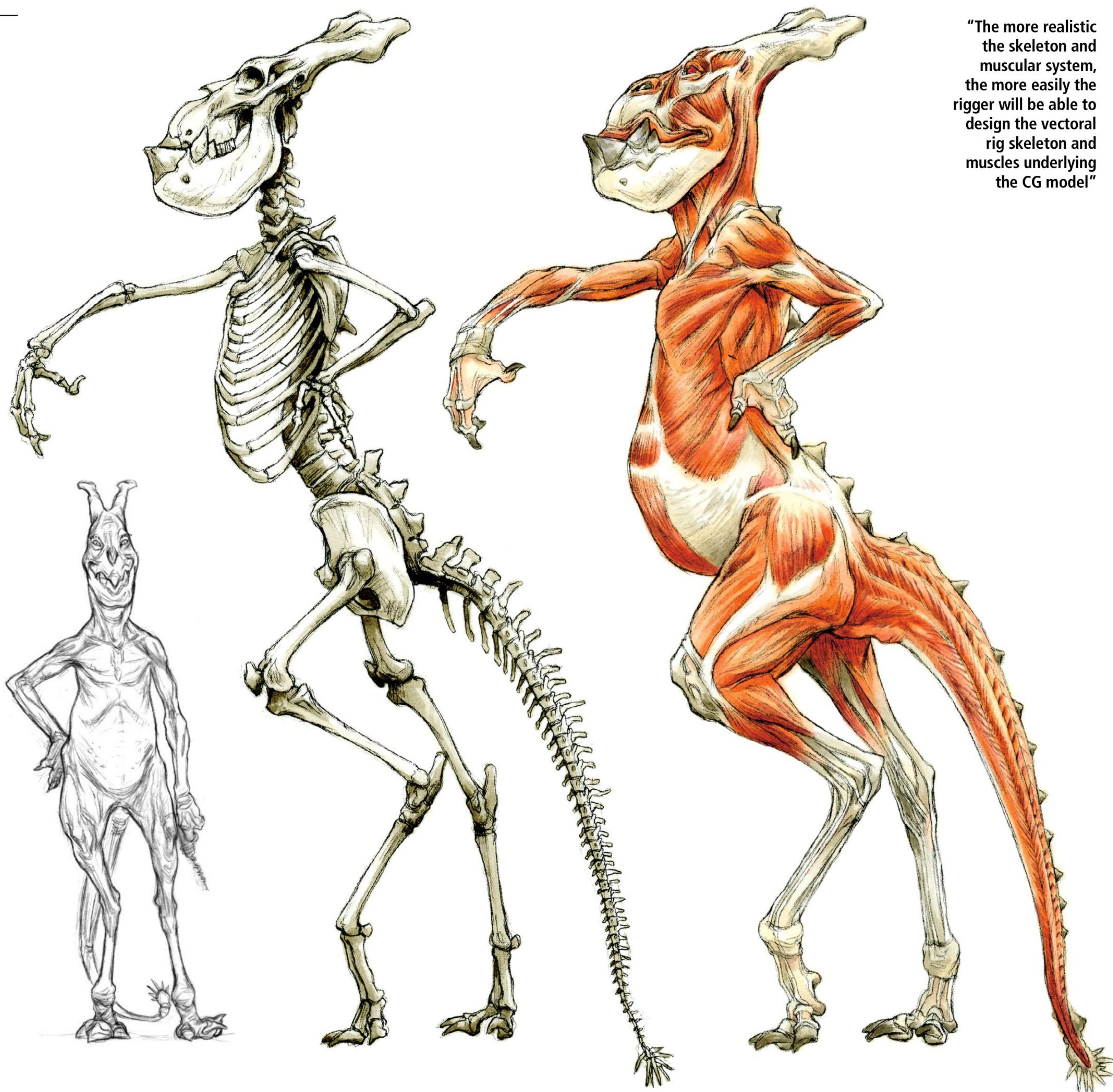
the *Star Wars* films and universe – including the famous and lovable Jar Jar Binks – was a unique and rewarding experience. Working directly with George Lucas in the pre-production art department for the prequels was a true roller-coaster in terms of the excitement and pure creative energy generated.

"We were running as fast as we could, artistically speaking," Terry reveals. "We had deadlines when we met with George every week, usually on a Friday, but

“ Designing creatures for the Star Wars films – including the famous and lovable Jar Jar Binks – was a unique and rewarding experience, and a true roller-coaster ”



"The more realistic the skeleton and muscular system, the more easily the rigger will be able to design the vectorial rig skeleton and muscles underlying the CG model"



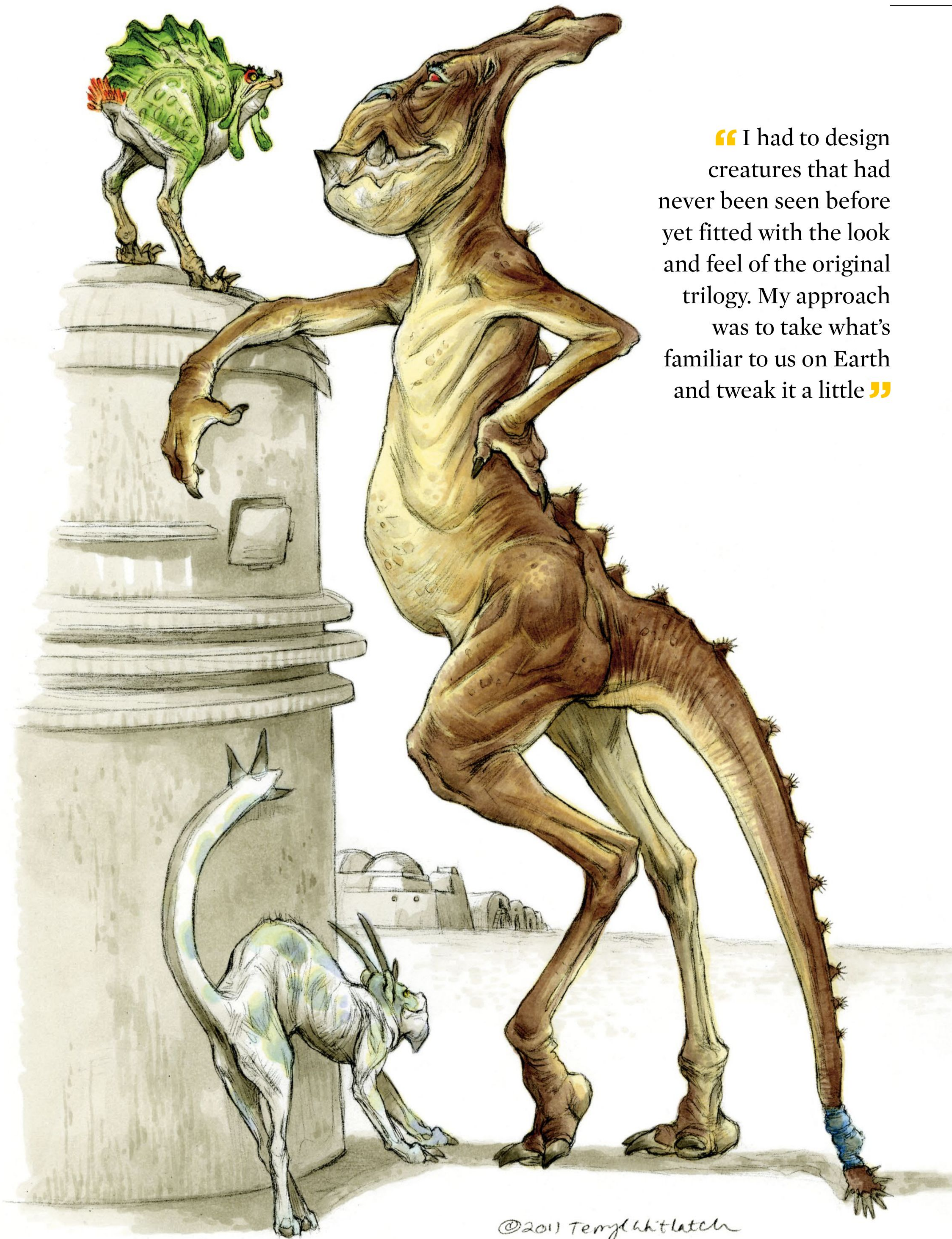
sometimes more than that. He gave us an awful lot of freedom and blue sky, which was wise, I think, because he got a lot out of us and ended up with more designs than he would have if we'd just stuck to a rigid description of creatures and vehicles.

"I had to design creatures that had never been seen anywhere before, yet had a familiar connection with the look and feel already established in the original trilogy. My approach was to take what's familiar to us on Earth and tweak it a little. This methodology is characteristic of George's outlook and direction for the invention of Star Wars critters."

For the pod racers in Episode I, however, there were some specific requirements. "There should be a lot of physical variety, the racers needed to be realistic, and they had to be small enough to drive the pods, just like lightweight jockeys for racehorses. And they needed to provide comic relief.

"With the pod racers, I was able to draw from my memory bank and visual references, and take inspiration from actual animals. In the case of the pod racer Teemto Pagalies – whose personality

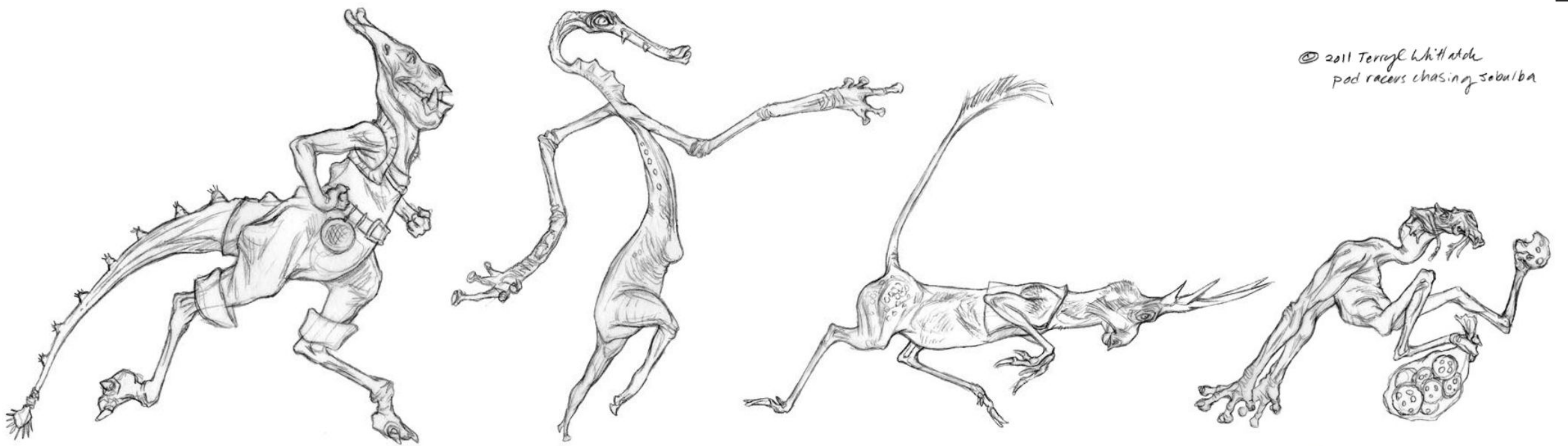
“ I had to design creatures that had never been seen before yet fitted with the look and feel of the original trilogy. My approach was to take what’s familiar to us on Earth and tweak it a little ”



“Initially George Lucas tends to work with personality rather than what the creature eventually looks like”



© 2011 Terry Whitcher



is somewhat similar to Bullwinkle the Moose – I was inspired by hoofed mammals (ungulates), specifically hartebeests, moose for their sloping eye-to-horn profile and camels for their hind limbs. I also sifted in some Celebes macaque monkey into the face, and of course there's a bit of human anatomy adapted into the upper torso, specifically arms with hands – all the better to steer with! The whole animal needed to be functional for its film role, rather than either a human in an animal costume or a chimera, which is the stitching together of recognisable animal species, such as in a mermaid, griffin or centaur."

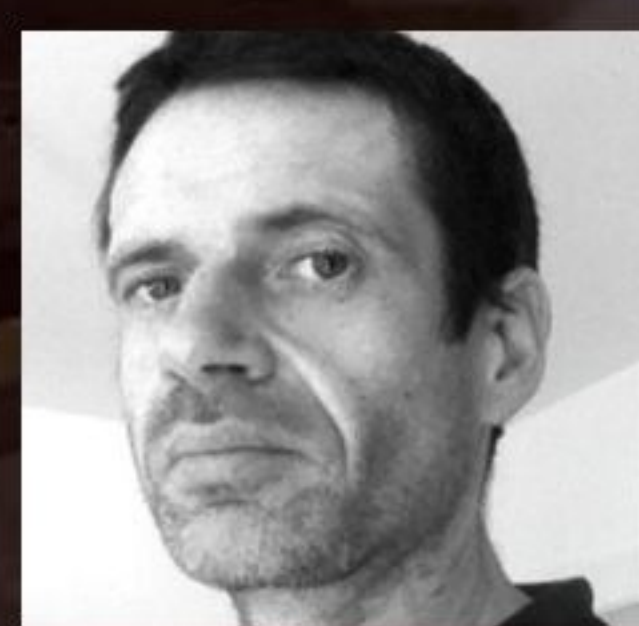
Initially, however, Terryl adds, "George tends to work with personality rather than what the creature eventually looks like." This can mean starting from character rather than anatomy. In the case of Sebulba, his nasty character was based on a camel: "I saw him as a very aloof, irritable dromedary."

"For this narrative illustration [left] I drew a scene where three of the pod racers – the antelope-like Clegg Holdfast, the Pipefish-seahorse-inspired Adar Beedo and moose-macaque-like Teemto Pagalies – are having

a nice spot of tea together after a successful race (successful meaning they all survived)."

Sometimes more practical considerations come into play, too. "The interesting thing about Jabba," Terryl says, "is that although at that time he was described as a slug, which is an invertebrate animal, I went on to create a vertebrate skeleton for him. This was important to design both for the reality of the film and for the benefit of the production riggers. Since he also has non-scaly skin, albeit lumpy and bumpy, Jabba is much closer to an amphibian and I suppose his closest Earthly relative would be the hellbender or Japanese giant salamander – a large and magnificently ugly beast."

The orthographic sketches for pod racer character Sebulba, ready to be sculpted in 3D



PAUL DAINTON

A studio artist for Games Workshop, Paul seized the chance to play in this universe



his year's ILM Art Department Challenge (see page 12) attracted more than 3,800 entrants from 101 countries, who together created an astounding total of 23,500 images. In this context it's some achievement to finish as one of the five artists with Honourable Mentions, as did Paul Dainton.

Paul, originally from Bath in the UK, studied Graphics and Illustration in Hull. He originally worked solely in traditional media – oils, pen and ink, and the like – and he says “I still really enjoy just sketching or life drawing

“ Hopefully I have managed to convey a sense of the drama, adventure and emotion of the Star Wars universe ”

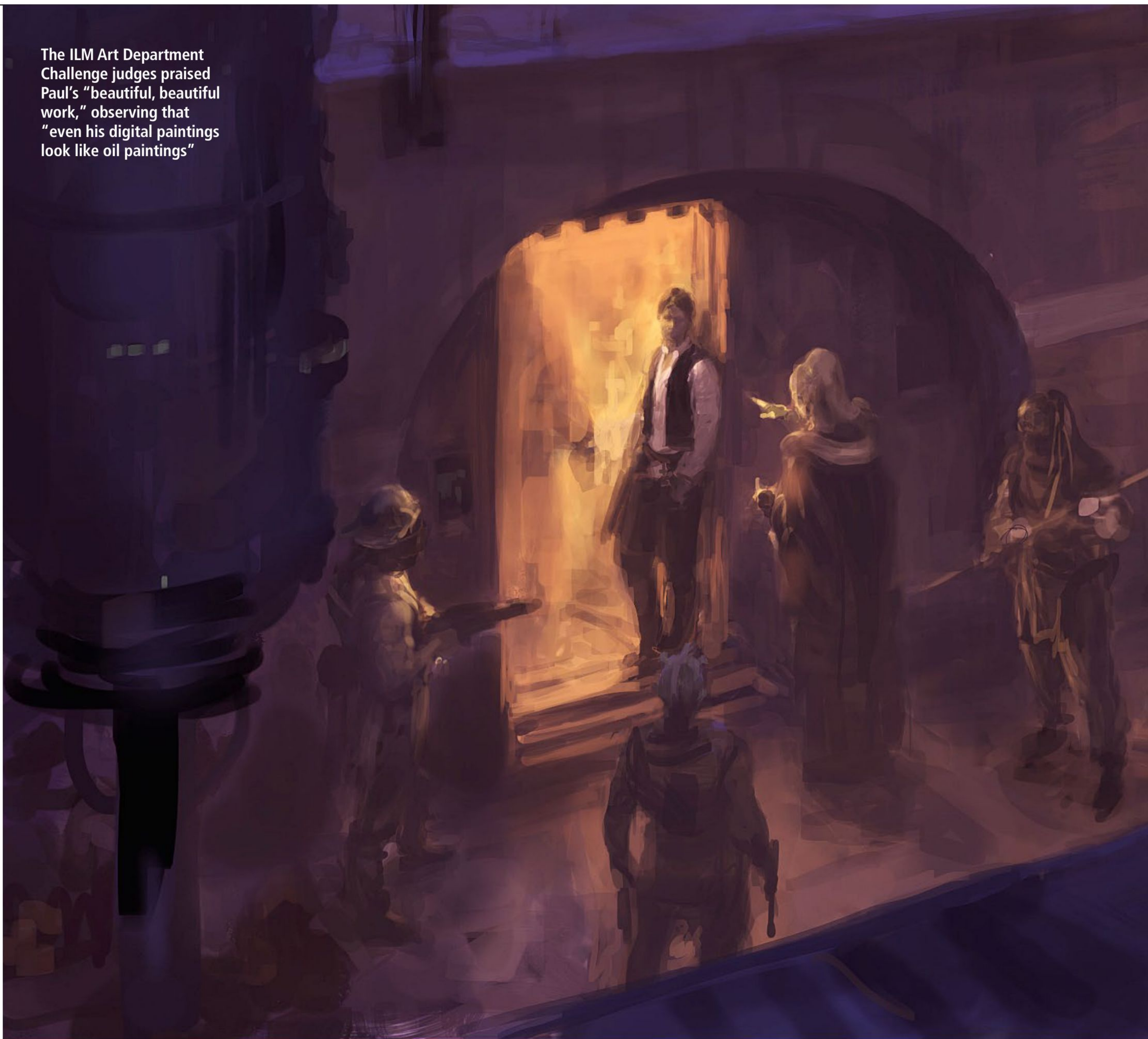
with pencil and paper. I now work mostly in Photoshop but I think this background is still probably apparent in my work. I've been heavily influenced by many of the usual-suspect traditional painters and illustrators – Howard Pyle, Joseph Clement Coll, Sargent, Velázquez, Ben Nicholson and the like. As a young child I grew up in the era of Star Wars, ET, Jaws and Indiana Jones, with a love for the

quirkier side of fantasy embodied in Warhammer and Moorcock.

“I'm currently fulfilling one of my childhood ambitions working as an in-house studio artist for Games Workshop.

“I learnt about the Challenge somewhat last minute, but it seemed like a unique opportunity to have some fun in the Star Wars universe. I'm not sure I had any particular expectations with

The ILM Art Department Challenge judges praised Paul's "beautiful, beautiful work," observing that "even his digital paintings look like oil paintings"



regard to the result, though, so it's turned out to be a rather pleasant surprise, particularly given the amazing work produced by so many of the entrants.

"Hopefully I have managed to convey a sense of the drama, adventure and emotion of the Star Wars universe. For me, character, emotion and story are the most compelling, so I tried to capture that in my images and designs.

"Working through the concept art process was really informative and has helped me to look at my illustrative work in a fresh way, which will I hope just keep me improving as an artist.

"Altogether," Paul concludes, "it was a really great experience!"

<http://bit.ly/piddy>

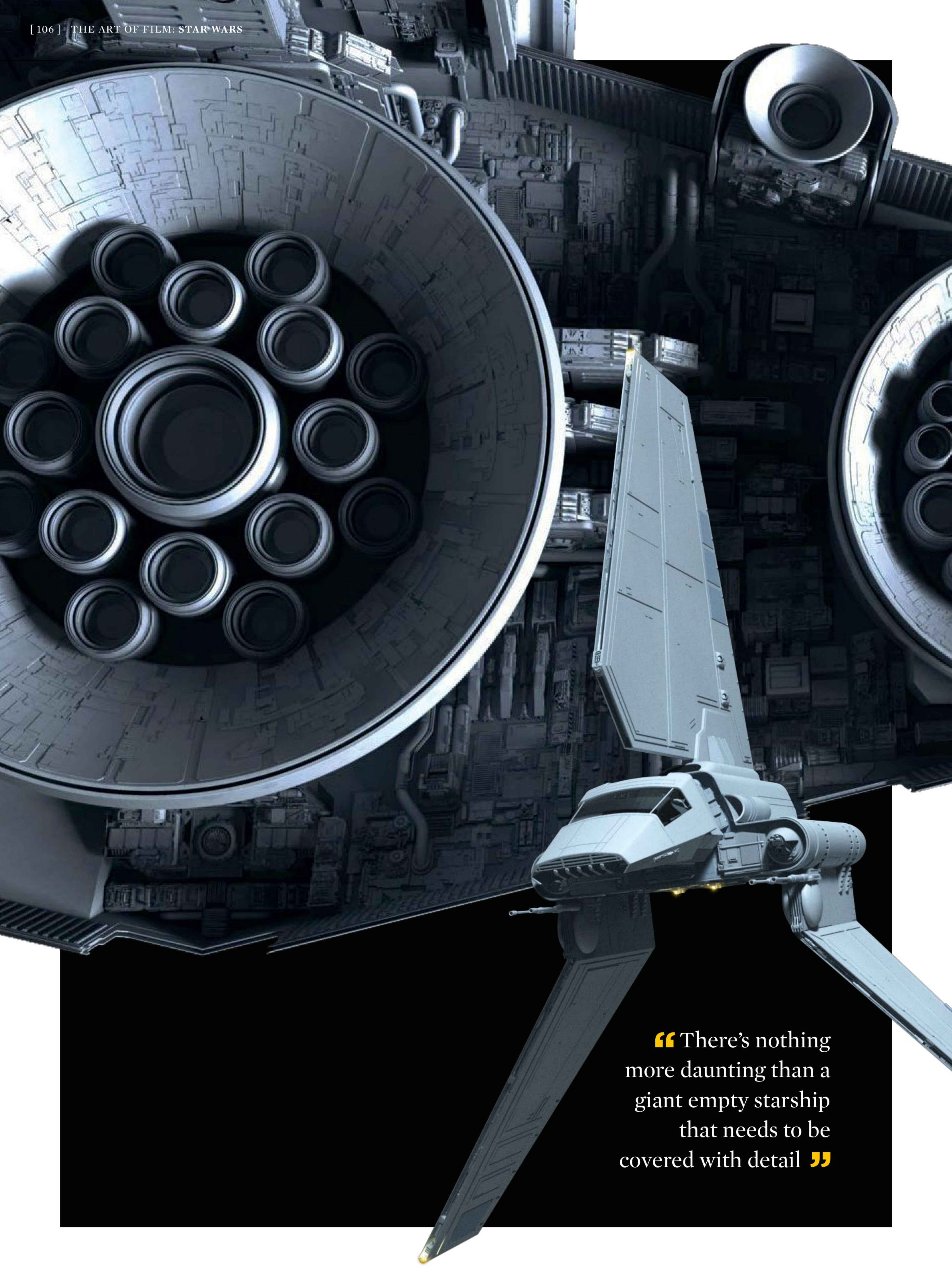




All images copyright © Lucasfilm Ltd./Disney

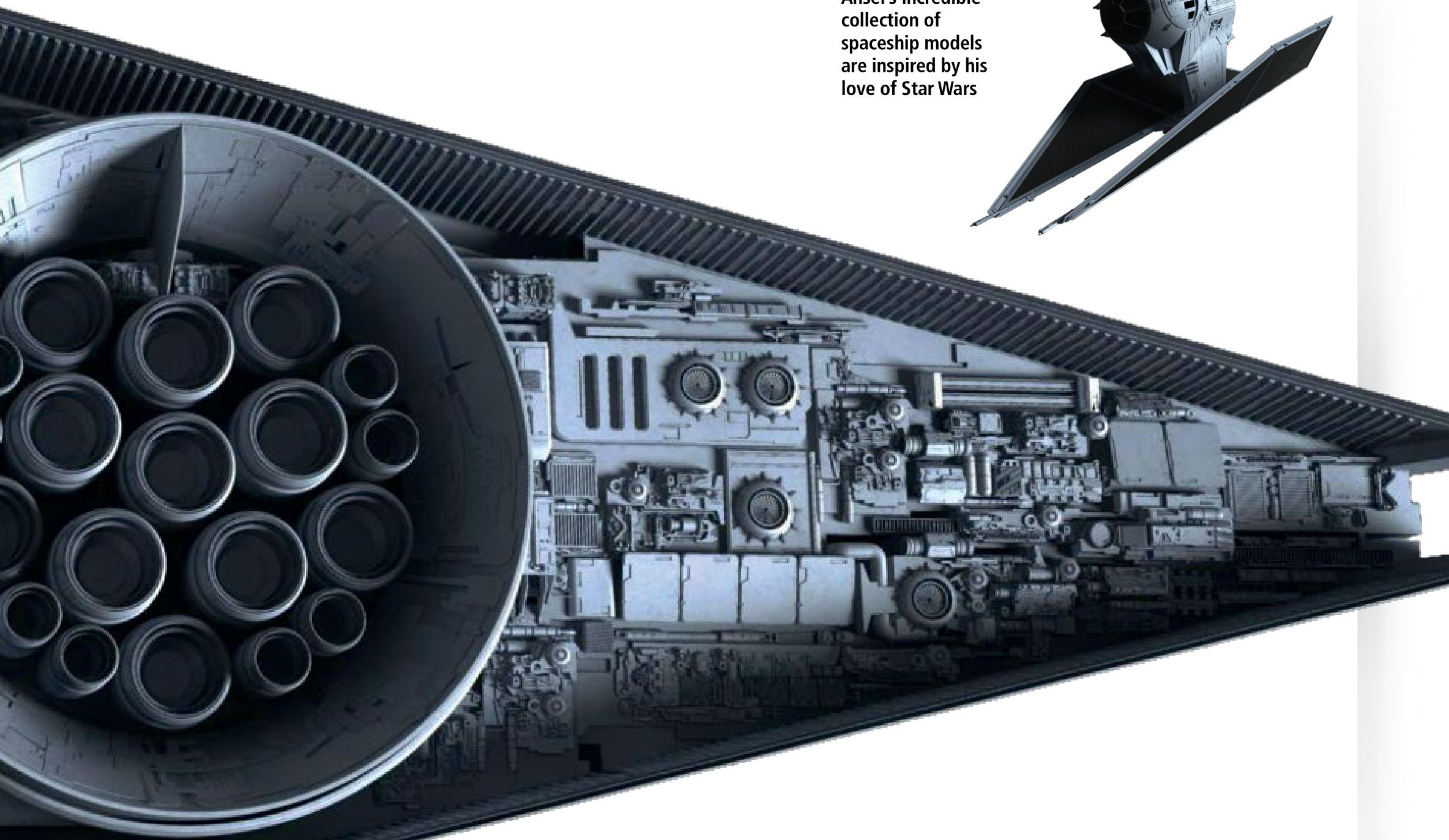
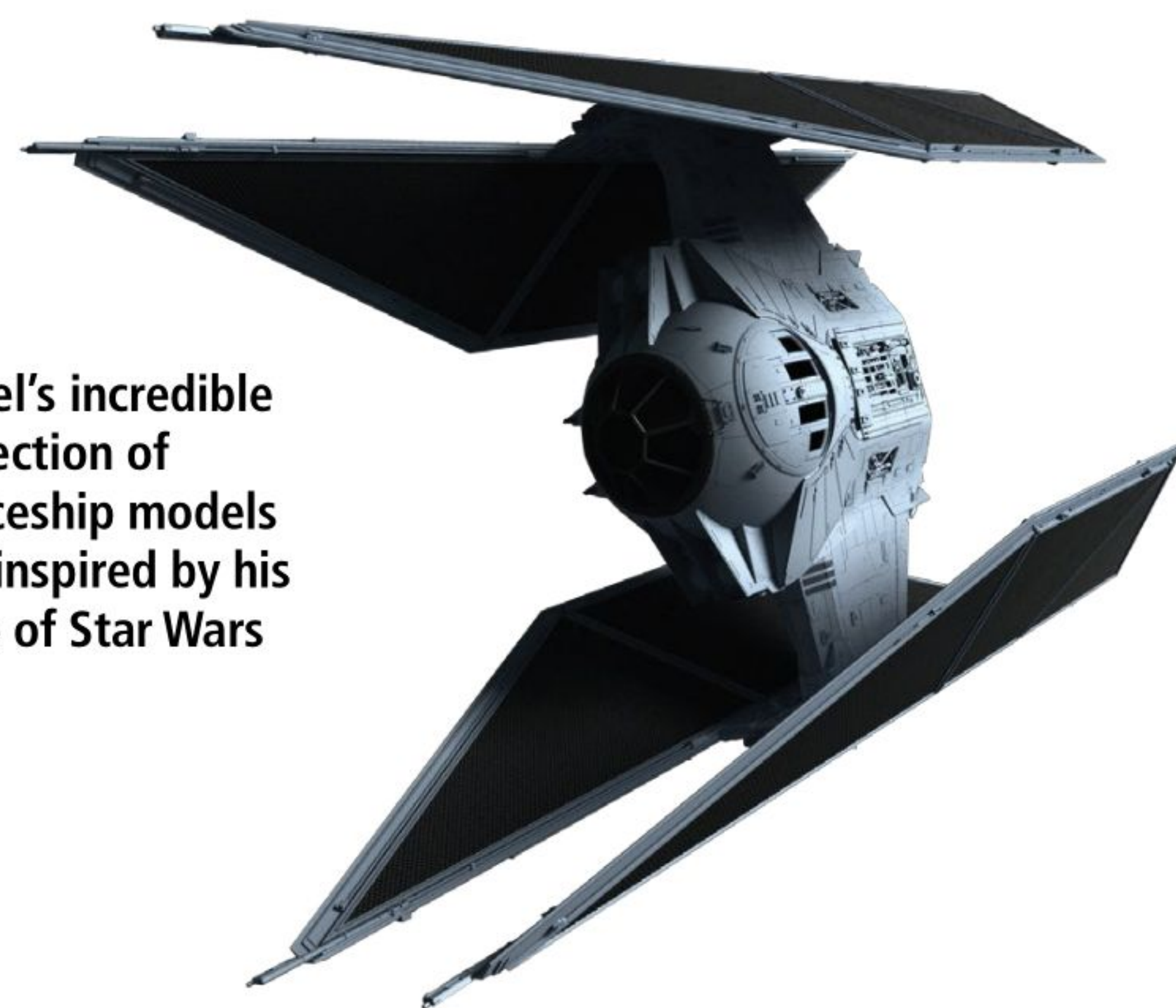


The judges noted Paul's great compositions and the subtlety in his colour work, creating an other-worldly feel



“There’s nothing more daunting than a giant empty starship that needs to be covered with detail”

Ansel's incredible collection of spaceship models are inspired by his love of Star Wars



ANSEL HSIAO

How the vehicles of Star Wars have been reimagined

The spaceship models of Ansel Hsiao are epic, detailed and enthralling. Your eye can't fail to be drawn to every angle and detail. And likely you'll recognise the major influence on Ansel's creations.

"Not surprisingly, it was from Star Wars," he says without a trace of hesitation when asked what was the first spaceship that inspired him. "When the Star Destroyer flew overhead for the first time, I was hooked on making cool spaceships. I don't see that going away in the near future."

It's a long, slow-building shot that caused a stir in 1977 and still does. It really needs to be seen on a cinema screen to appreciate the impact, as your entire view is slowly blocked by a sweeping majestic Star Destroyer designed by Ralph McQuarrie. No wonder Ansel has been so inspired to create his collection of grand models.

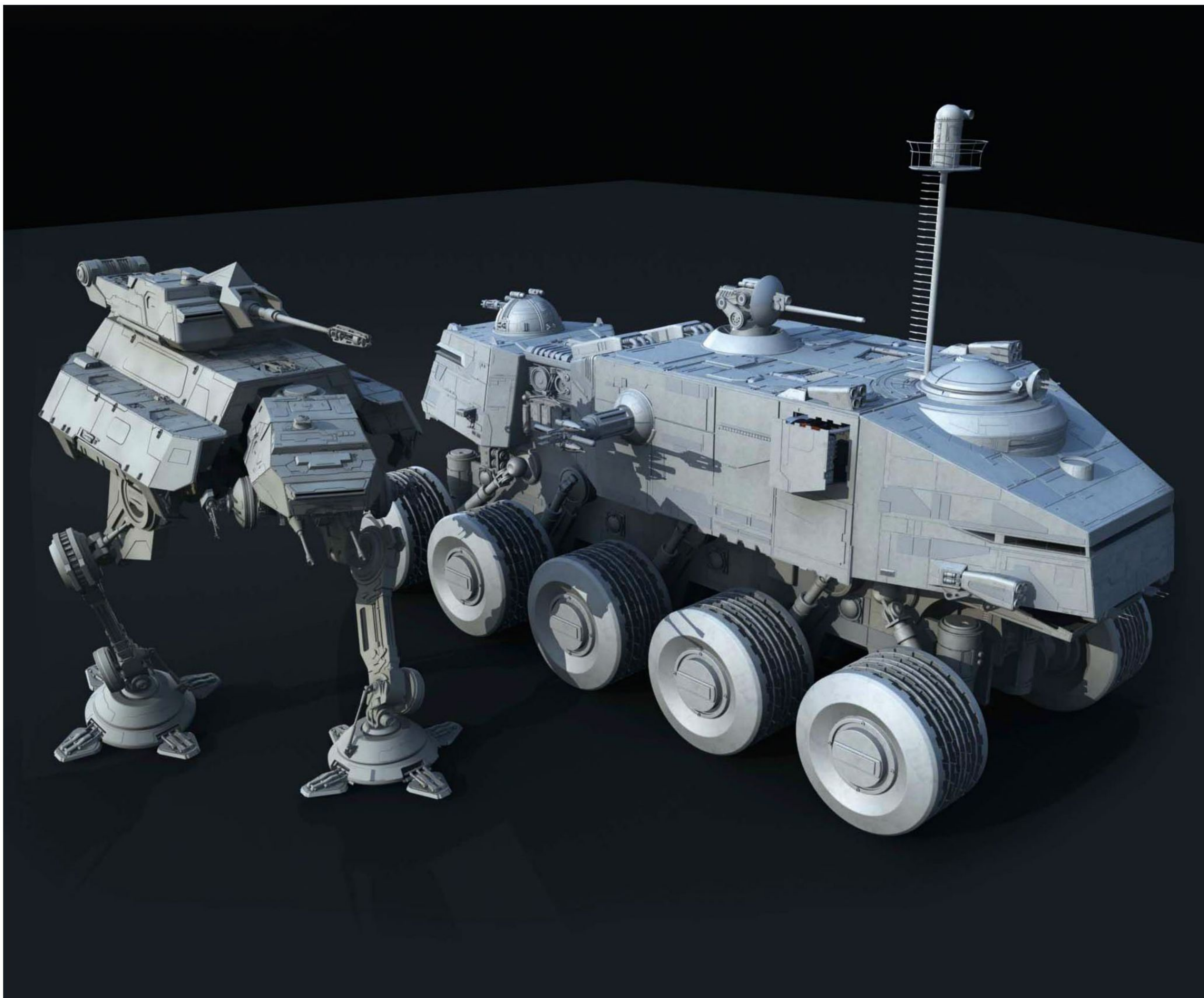
"I had some grand ambitions when starting out: Darth Vader's Executor from The Empire Strikes Back. Looking back on it I barely had a non-primitive object in that model, but I learned tons by doing it," explains Ansel, who reveals that his current models use more "real" details to evoke scale, such as pipes, fixtures, and "things that are based off of things that work, rather than just being boxes to break up outlines of basic shapes."

Ansel's core method for assembling his models – keeping assets modular and available for other uses





It's not just about variations of iconic shapes, but capturing an entire design ethos



– dates back to that first attempt to create the Executor model. Explaining the process, Ansel says his first step begins with visualisation, “collecting lots of reference material and deciding what elements from existing ships to use in the design of the new one. This involves a lot of simple modelling to get the feel of the project. The vast majority of the models I’ve abandoned get shelved at this stage, because something just doesn’t feel right.”

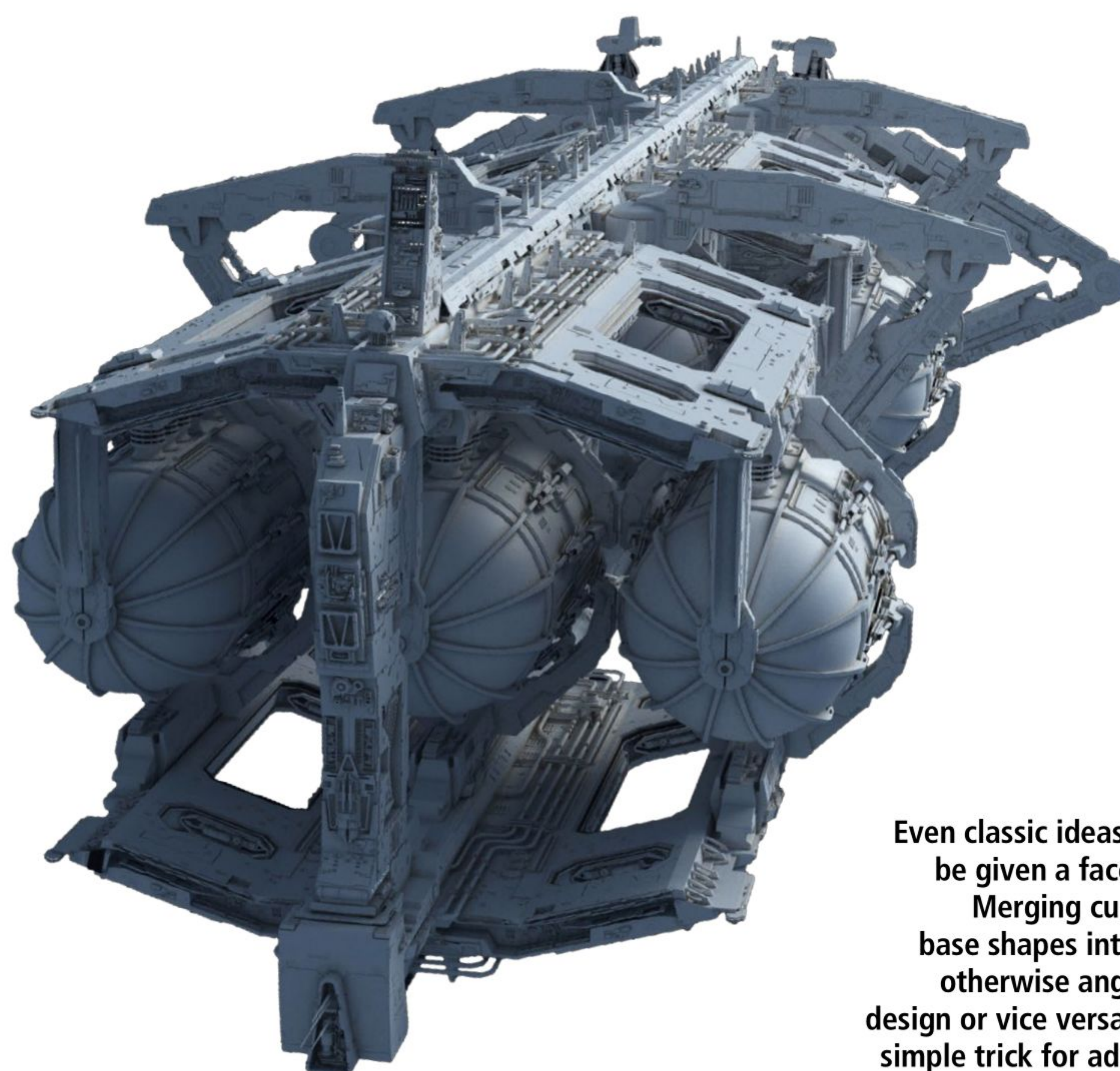
The next step is to search through his old models for detail elements to repurpose. Once they’re chosen, Ansel clears zones on his model to detail: “There’s nothing more daunting than a giant empty starship that needs to be covered with detail, and it helps to be able to focus on a series of small areas,” he says.

When the ship is detailed, Ansel will then clone or reference symmetrical areas of the ship, collapse modifier stacks and generally clean up the files. “I try to build fairly clean as I go – vertex clean-up at the end can be a nightmare for a multi-million-polygon ship.”

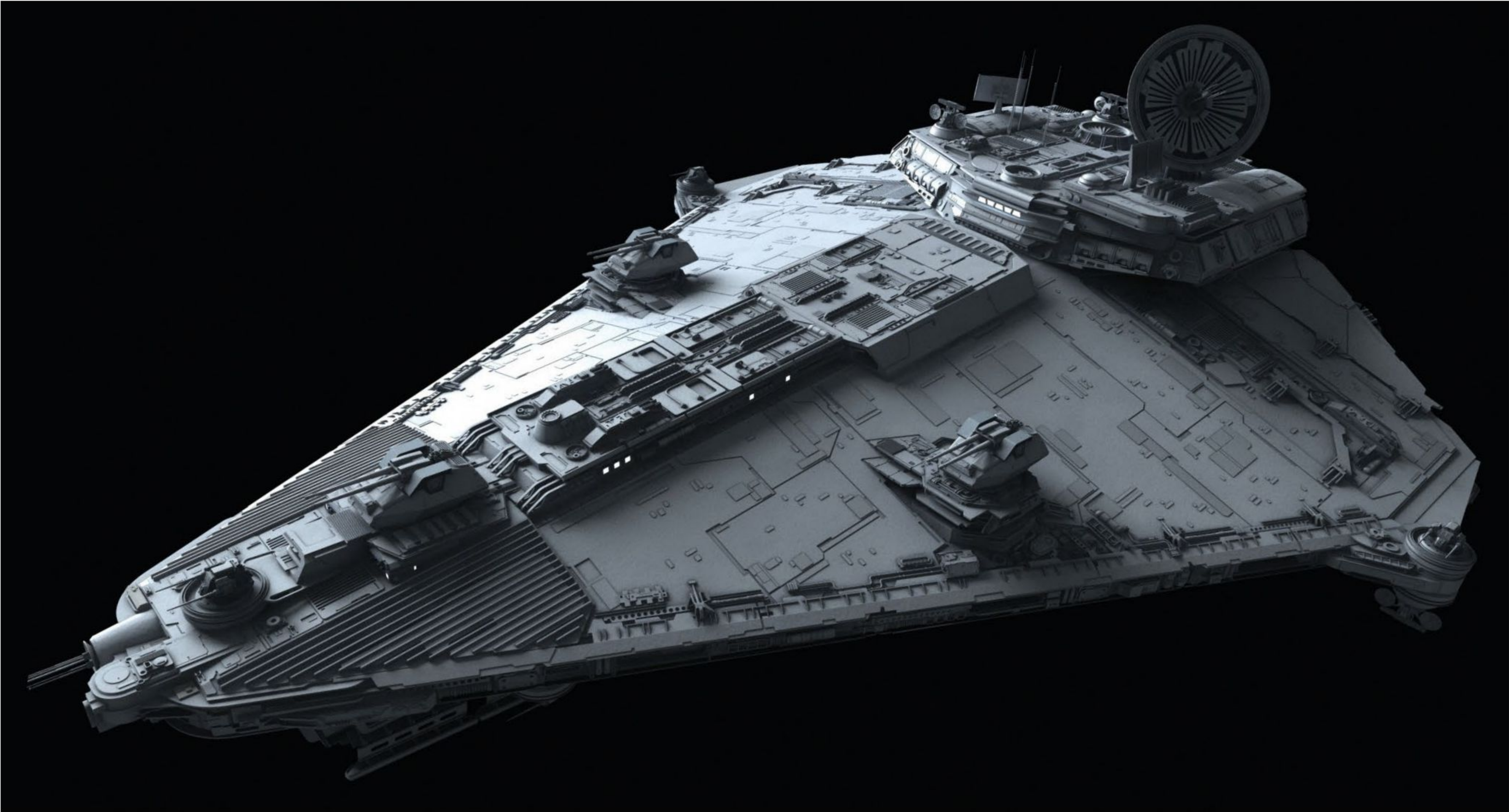
When working, Ansel draws inspiration from real-life machinery and vehicles. As his models have developed he’s sought to ensure that the detailing is as realistic as possible; to sell the idea of a grand starship you first need to convince viewers it can work.

“I’ve caught myself staring at things while travelling and thinking ‘that would make for a great piece of ‘greeble’,” Ansel says when considering his influences.

Of course, the big influence is Star Wars itself: “A lot of ideas come from the original sources. That means



Even classic ideas can be given a facelift. Merging curved base shapes into an otherwise angular design or vice versa is a simple trick for adding some spice to a model





“I think internal consistency within a setting is more important than believability in a design”

either the studio models themselves, or the model kits that the original models were scratch-built from.

“Partially it’s my first love in sci-fi, and partially I really like the ‘used’ aesthetic of the designs. It looks like it could all work, but offers literally a galaxy’s scope to come up with cool new variations. Plus, being able to see how my models can tie together thematically is really cool.”

Ansel has a clear idea of what makes a good starship design: “I think internal consistency within a setting is more important than believability when it comes to design,” he explains. “Everything else can be based on the universe that’s built around the story, and it’s up to the exposition to make things obvious.”

“But beyond that, the design should follow some basic physical principles that are intuitive: something that is supposed to be a battleship should not look flimsy, and rocket engines should look like they would be able to push a ship forward, rather than just into an endless spin. If you place elements within your design that are familiar to, yet different from, things in real life, that can make for some compelling sci-fi design,” he continues.

■ MODELLING A STARSHIP

Ansel Hsiao takes us through the process of piecing together an epic Star Wars inspired spaceship

GETTING IT SHIP SHAPE

Define the basic shapes of the ship. Here there’s a lot of playing with basic primitives and getting a feel for the scale and style of the project. It’s helpful to model some basic cues for size in some detail, so you have a good idea of what it’ll look like at the end.

MANAGING THE MODEL

Move on to discrete regions of the ship, one at a time so the project is broken down into manageable parts. Try to keep individual pieces of detail separate, so they can be re-purposed throughout the rest of the project. Always work in layers to keep viewport performance high.

SETTING OUT THE DETAILS

Inset details are a great way to fill space and add scale and complexity. They don’t always need to be unique. Also, ships don’t need to be evenly detailed to the highest level: the camera and the eye will focus naturally on certain areas, and these are the ones to work more on.

USE INDUSTRIAL DETAILING

Certain kinds of detail – like pipe and cable runs, rivets and small cut-outs – are disproportionately good at adding complexity given their poly count. Such detail is also useful for either breaking up or enhancing the outline of the basic masses that form the core of the model.

PLAN FOR THE CAMERA

Figure out where the camera might linger on your model, and don’t be afraid to spend polys heavily to make it extra interesting to the eye. These are good places to layer greebles on top of each other in order to create more interesting details.

MIX AND MATCH DETAILS

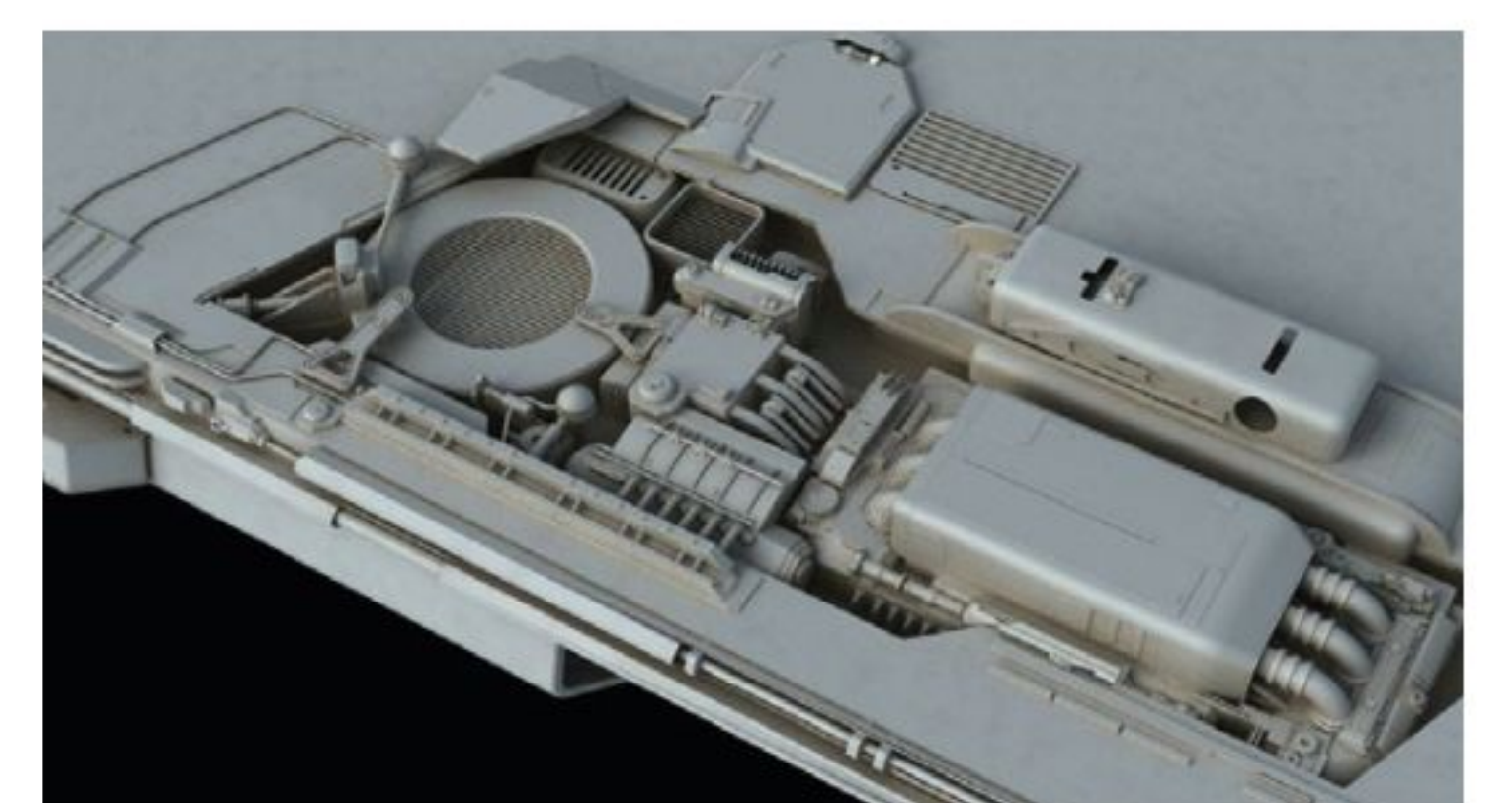
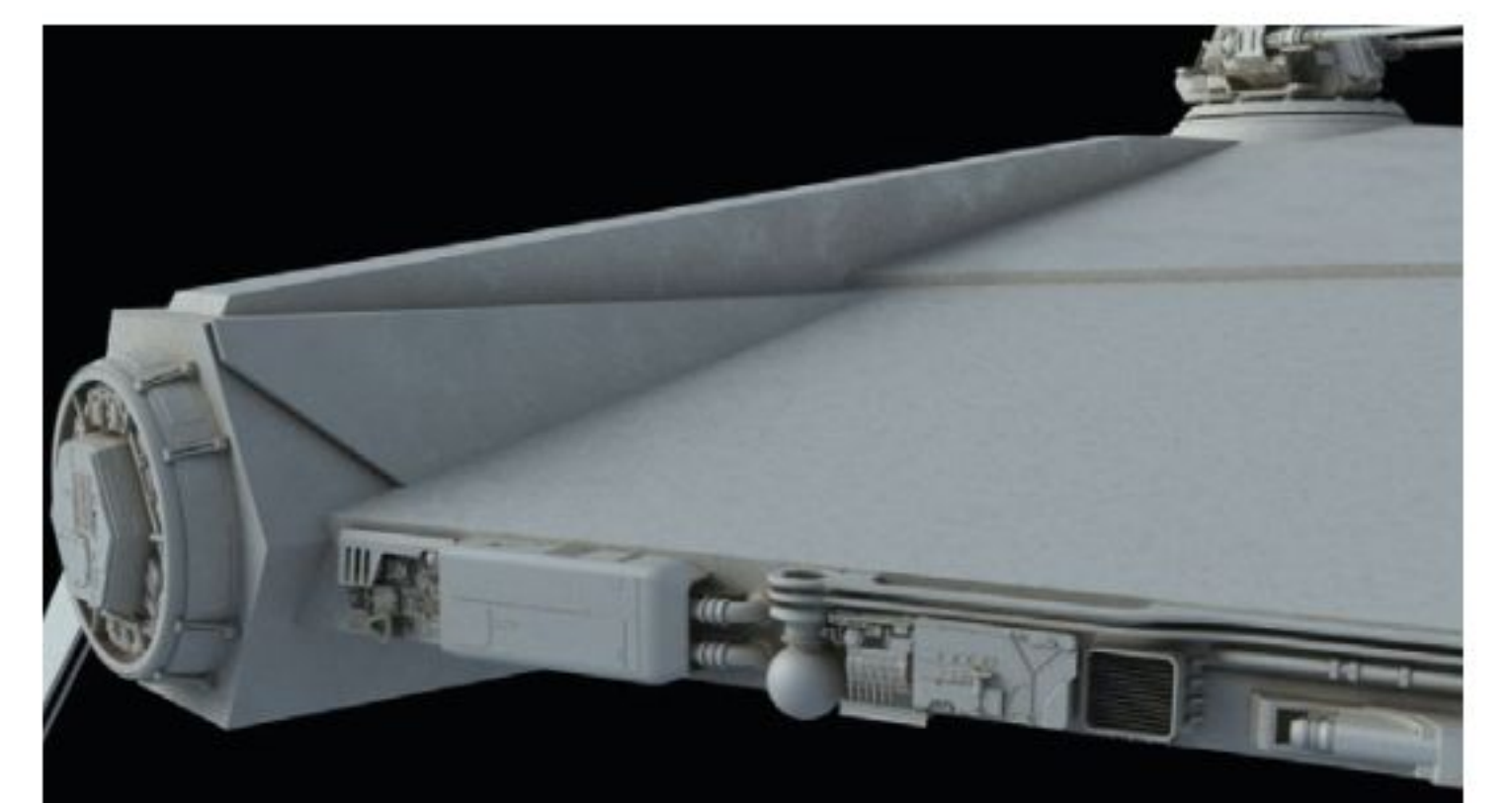
Mix up the types of detail as you go. Mechanical detail can help a swoopy ship seem functional. Remember, real vehicles aren’t carved from a single piece of material, so adding individual elements like plates or bits of machinery can make a design look realistic.

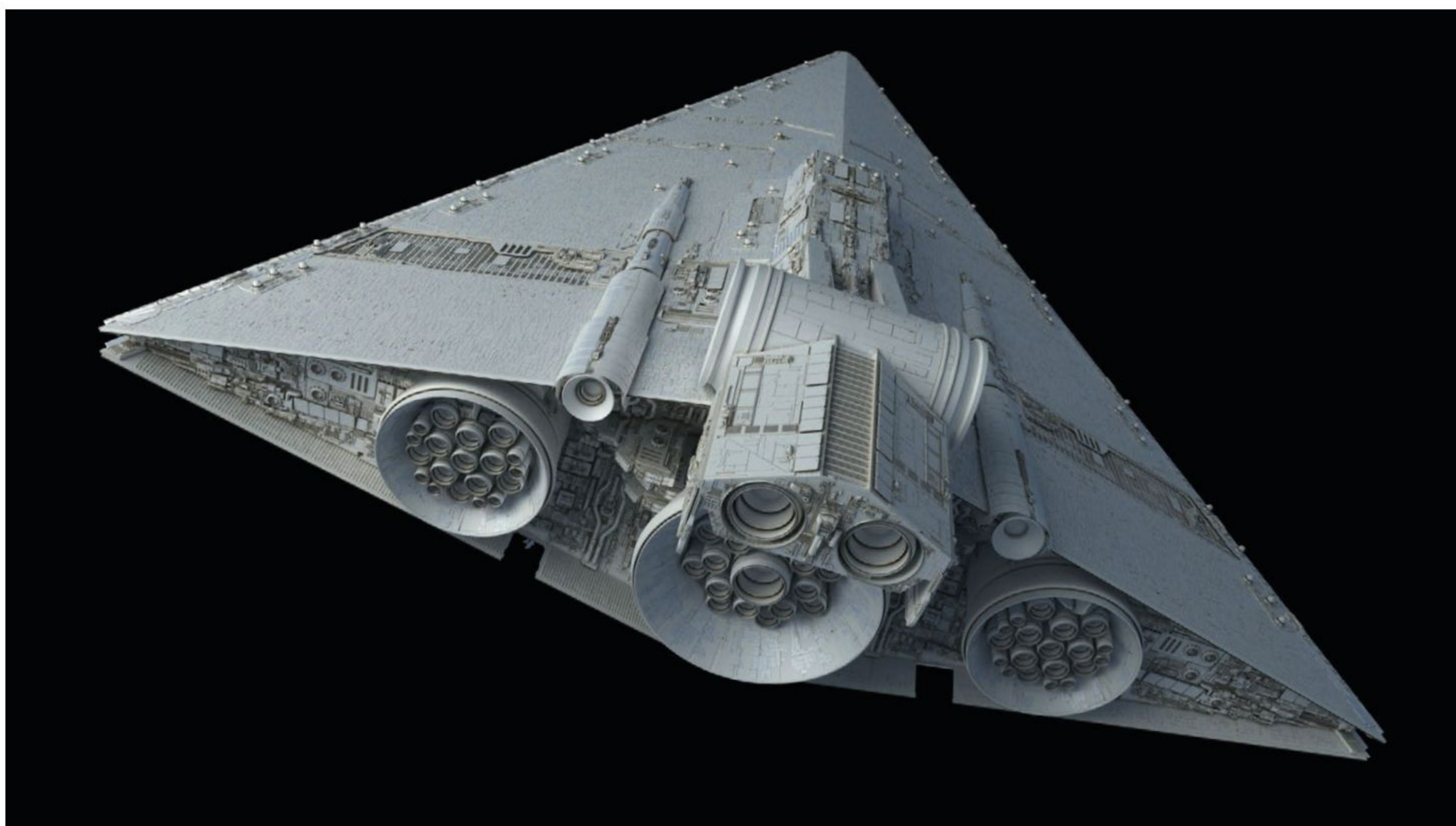
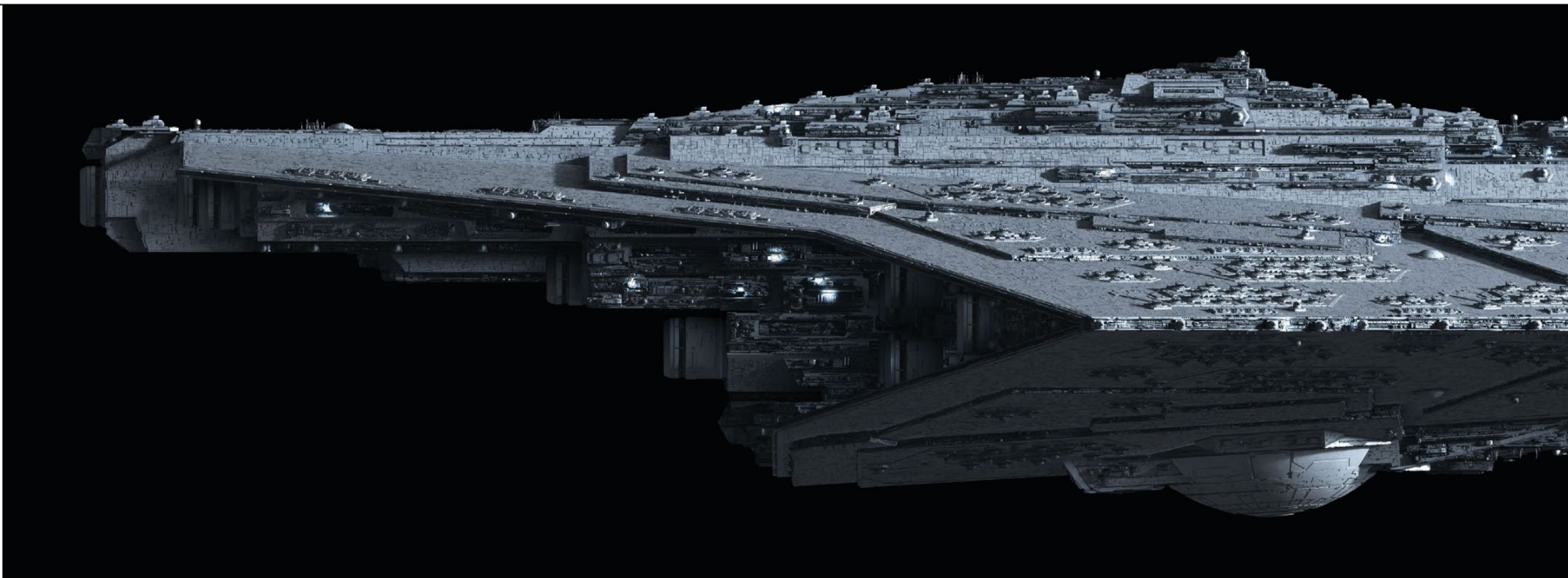
DETAIL LARGE SURFACES

Break up surfaces with shallow details (or do this in texturing). Discontinuity in level of detail is grating – a well detailed ship can be let down by empty areas. Add some access ports, panel lines and surface cable runs. The surface of a ship doesn’t have to look like a tile floor!

THE RIGHT PERSPECTIVE

When everything has been set up, remember to do some large renders to check for major mistakes. It can be frustrating to render over and over, but this is the best way to make sure all the obvious issues are ironed out. Plus, you get to enjoy the result!





■ WHAT MAKES A GREAT SHIP DESIGN?

Firstly, how well defined is it? Are the key elements of the design memorable but clear enough that someone would really remember it?

Secondly, the detail complexity. Are there enough elements and enough layers of elements to make it interesting at different scales? This really sells the intended size of a ship and gives you the chance to make impressive areas of deep detail.

Thirdly, how relatable is it? Are there parts that are instinctively familiar even though they may look fantastical in actual form? That's where how well you integrate your references into the design comes into play. Combine all of that, and I think you'll have a spaceship design that's going to stand the test of time.

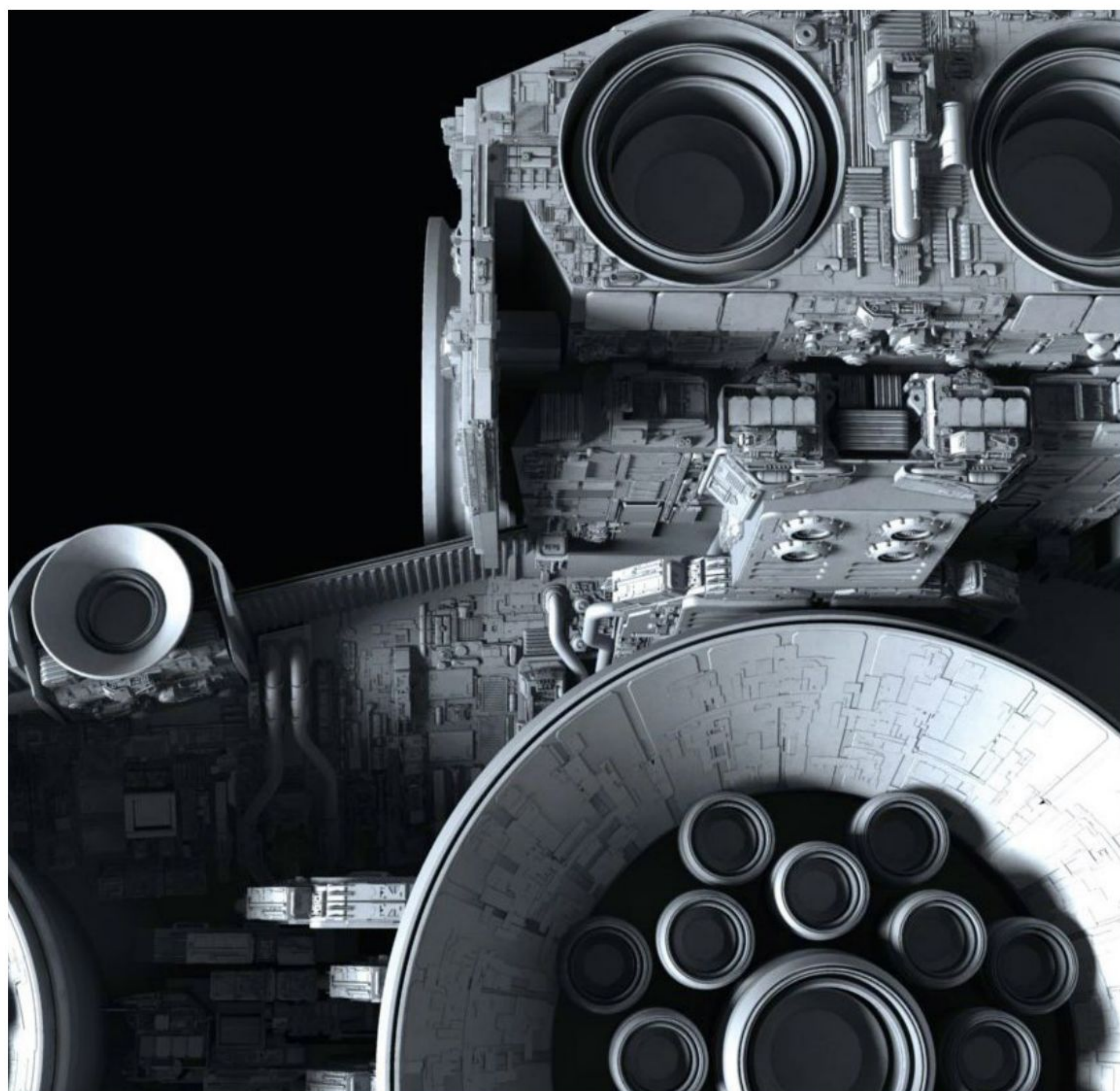
“I spend tons of time on the basic shapes and proportions. Detailing is easy once that's done”

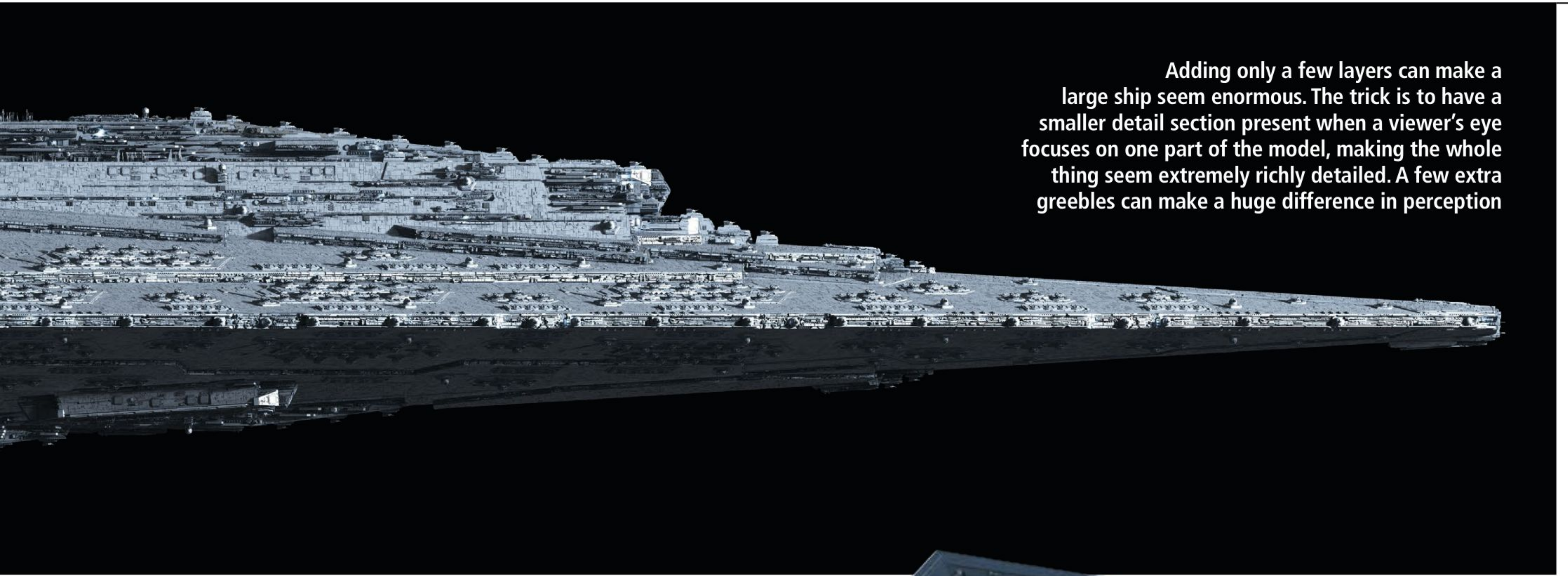
A single ship model can take Ansel anywhere from a week to a month to create. A more simple ship or vehicle that doesn't require a lot of editing can be completed in a matter of days, however, and Ansel points to his now extensive collection of pre-modelled assets that can be used to quickly detail any given ship or vehicle.

“The limiting step really is setting the basic shape and style of a project,” says Ansel, explaining that time invested in the planning stages can avoid problems later: “I spend tons of time early on making sure the basic shapes and proportions are where I want them. Detailing is easy once that's done.”

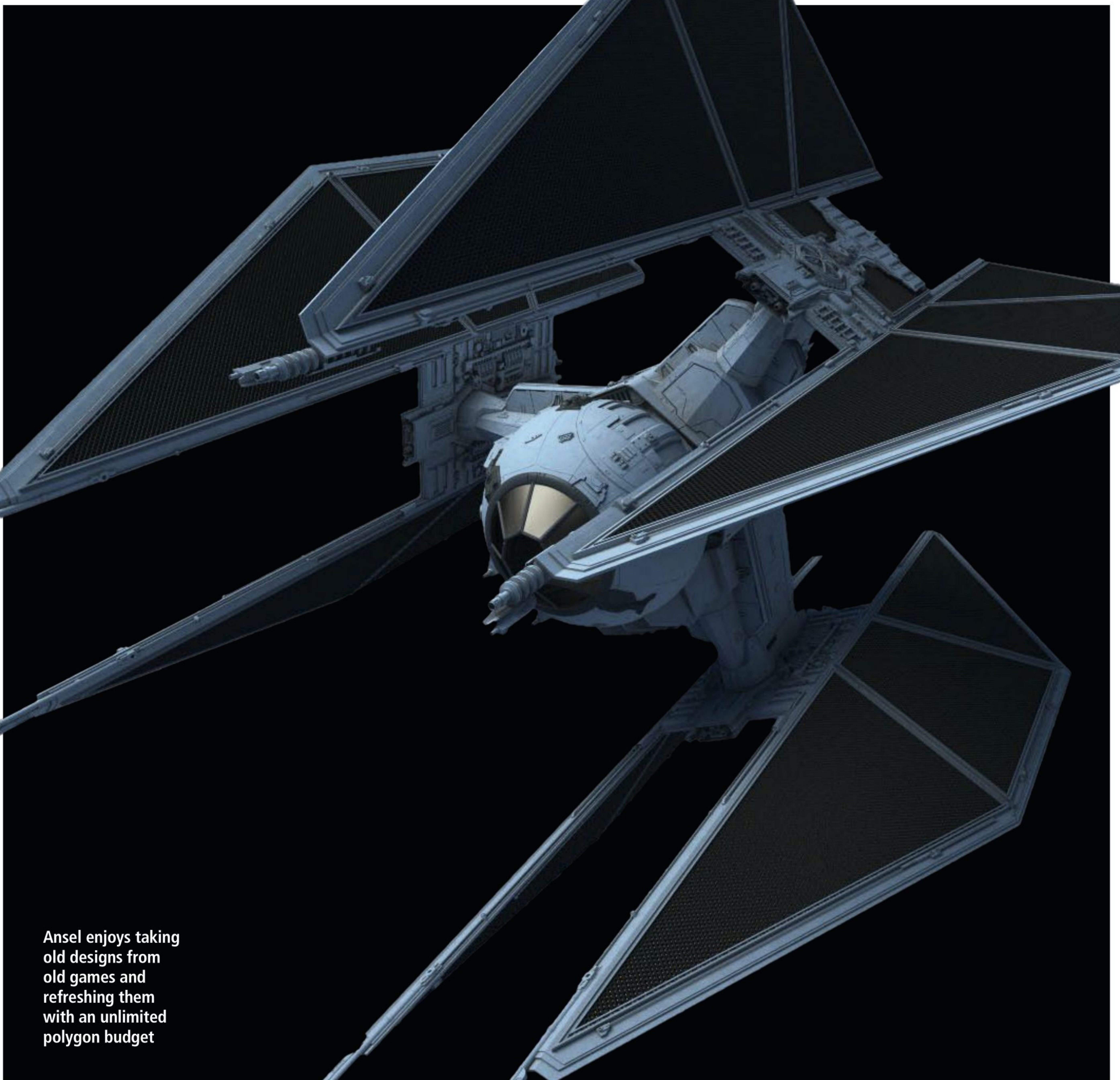
With a growing collection of Star Wars models in his portfolio, the promise of another new movie in December means Ansel won't be short of inspiration.

“Any foray into my favourite fictional universe is great to see,” he enthuses. “From a visual standpoint, I'm really interested in seeing how they accommodate the older design cues in whatever new designs they come up with.”





Adding only a few layers can make a large ship seem enormous. The trick is to have a smaller detail section present when a viewer's eye focuses on one part of the model, making the whole thing seem extremely richly detailed. A few extra greebles can make a huge difference in perception



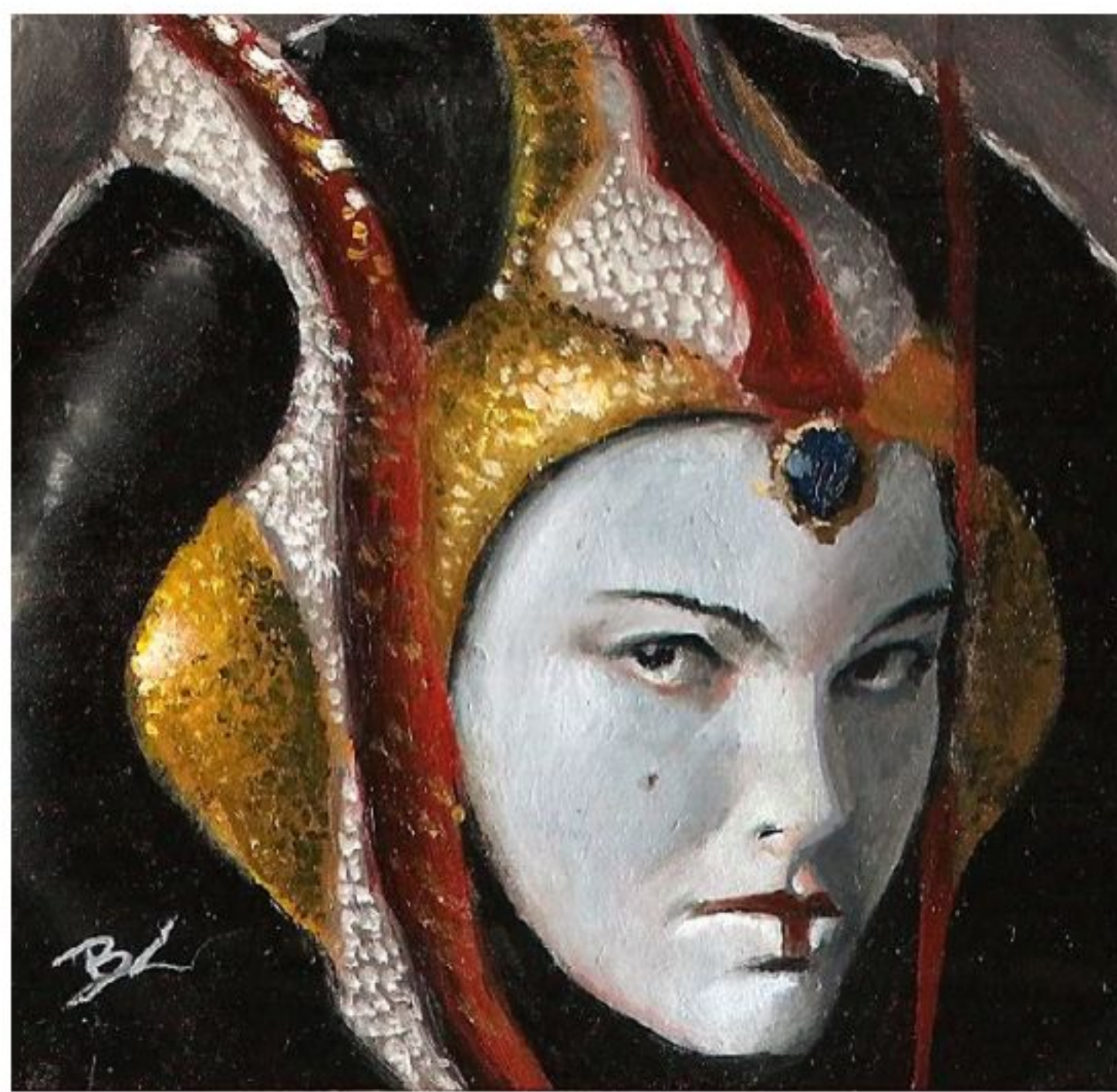
Ansel enjoys taking old designs from old games and refreshing them with an unlimited polygon budget



"A few of the 50 oil painted cards I did for the Star Wars Galaxy 7 set from Topps. This was one of the last sets I worked on before I decided to change the direction of my art. Each card is oil painted 2.5x3.5 inches"

BRANDON KENNEY

The artist takes us from a love of sketch cards to full-scale paintings



Brandon Kenney grew up surrounded by art. He describes his mother as an incredible wildlife artist, and his grandmother used to tour the country creating pastel portraits for a living. Both of his parents encouraged him and his sisters to express themselves through art, and he never felt that pursuing art as a career was a negative thing in any way. He says he knew what he wanted to do for a living at the age of five.

Brandon enrolled in the Art Institute of California, where he studied traditional hand-drawn animation. After graduation he was uncertain what direction to follow. Knowing that the animation industry was geared toward CGI, he tried his hand at 3D animation

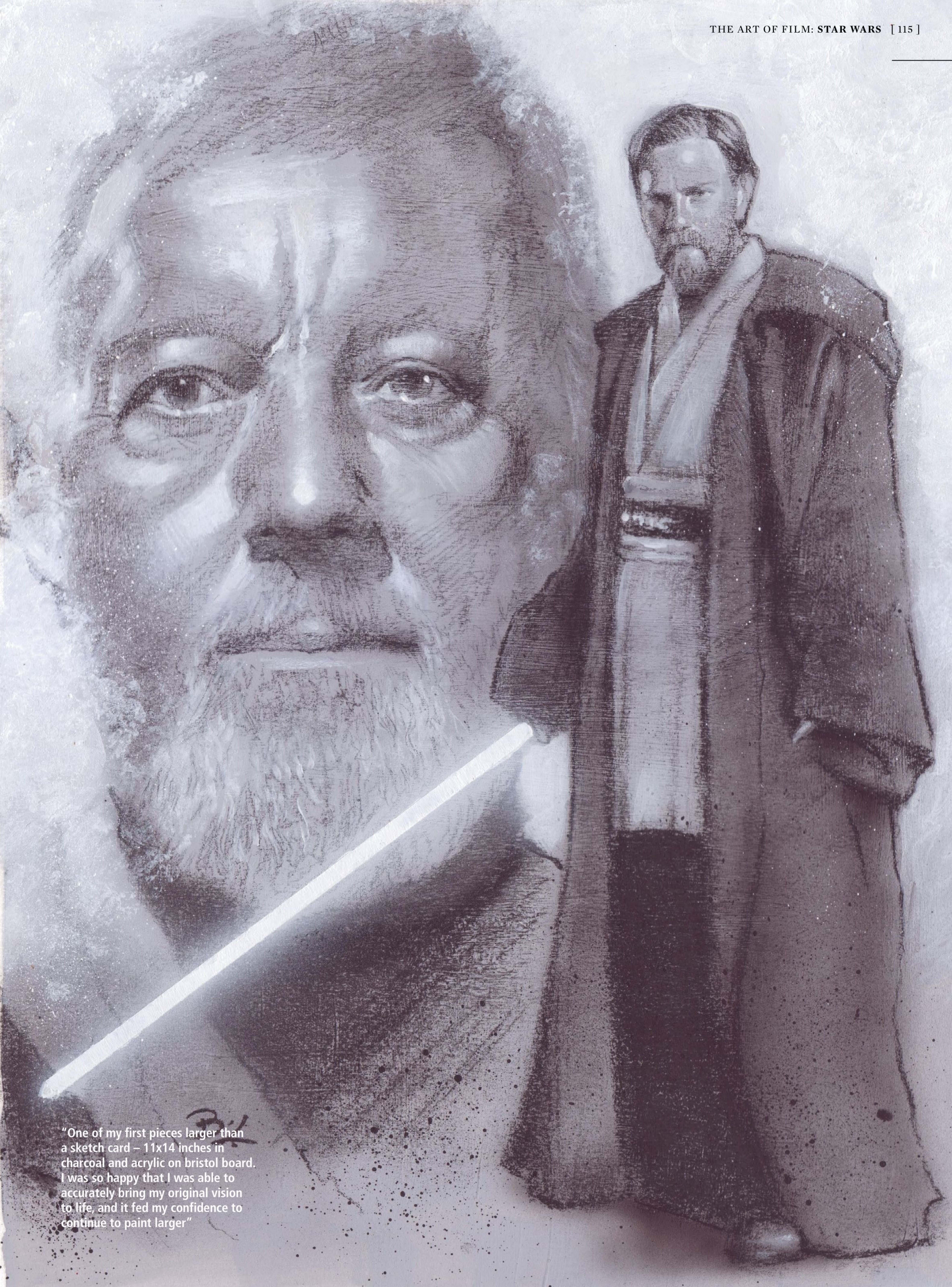
“I have found so much joy and excitement from conceptualising scenes in the Star Wars universe”

and Flash but couldn't find the same inspiration and joy he got from putting pencil to paper.

Shortly after graduation he was introduced to sketch cards – small pieces of original artwork that are often placed randomly into official sets of cards. Their size and collectability drew his interest and he began to try his hand at a few of them, “mostly just to keep from getting rusty as I figured out what to do next with my career,” he laughs. After a few months he started to work on official sketch card sets from licences like Marvel, DC Comics and Star Wars. “These cards proved to be a great way to experiment with mediums I was previously unfamiliar with,” he says. “I tried markers, coloured pencils, acrylics, watercolours, and eventually I began painting them in oil. The size allowed me to try new ideas or techniques and quickly see the results.

“In 2014,” he continues, “I started painting larger in an effort to move from simply recreating scenes to re-imagining them and concepting new ideas.

“Currently I’m pushing my comfort limits and continuing to experiment with techniques both digital and traditional,” Brandon concludes. “I have found so



"One of my first pieces larger than a sketch card – 11x14 inches in charcoal and acrylic on bristol board. I was so happy that I was able to accurately bring my original vision to life, and it fed my confidence to continue to paint larger"



"I was terrified to paint a large oil painting like this for a long time because of the time and commitment. I remember struggling a lot with Padme's face and losing the likeness several times before I was able to get it back"

Sherry

much joy and excitement from conceptualising scenes based in the Star Wars universe recently and I have so many ideas I want to bring to life!”

When did you do your first Star Wars painting?

I drew so much Star Wars as a child, it would be difficult to remember the first painting, but the first licensed artwork I created was for the Topps trading card set Star Wars Galaxies 5. I remember choosing to airbrush acrylic on those cards because I wanted to try something new and memorable. Working on that set was like a dream to me, and I had so much fun.

Do you have a favourite character to sketch and why?

I have a few personal favourites, but if I had to choose one character it would be Darth Maul. His makeup and grimy teeth, the texture in his horns and just the general badass feel of the character – I love it.

Which is the hardest character to get right?

For me there are certain actors with a likeness that is *very* difficult to capture. Harrison Ford is one of them. He’s so easy to get wrong that whenever I do a Han Solo piece I take into account the extra time it will take to make sure the likeness is accurate. Mark Hamill is another one. All it takes is a small shift in the placement of the eye, or for the nose to be a bit too large or small and suddenly he no longer looks like Luke Skywalker.

Can you tell us a little about your process?

My process usually changes for each piece I do. There is never a precise formula that I can follow, I just have to be open to do whatever the piece needs to make it stronger. Generally, I start on paper with several very rough thumbnails. From there I’ll choose one or two, enlarge them, and refine digitally or on paper. It’s at

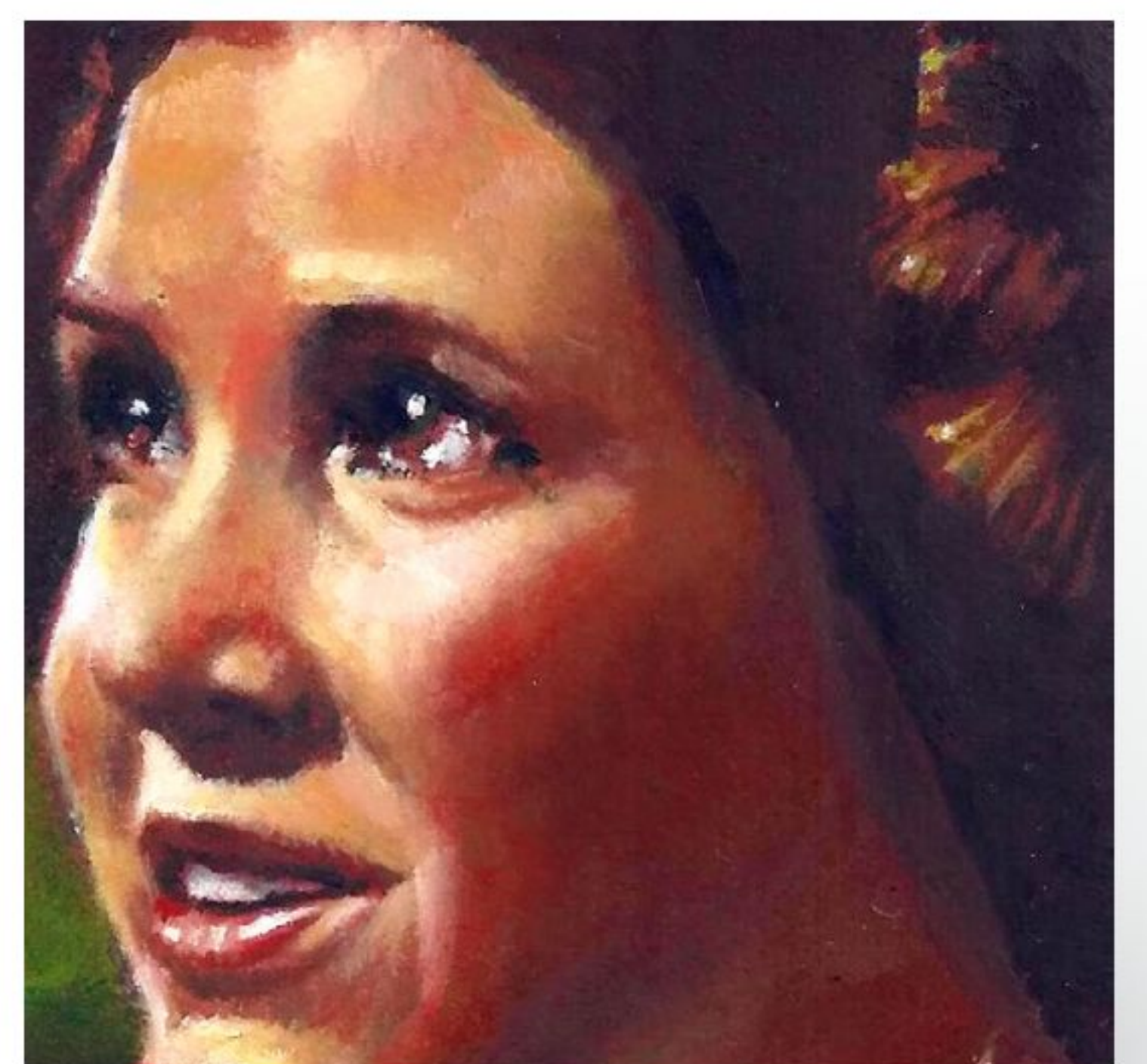
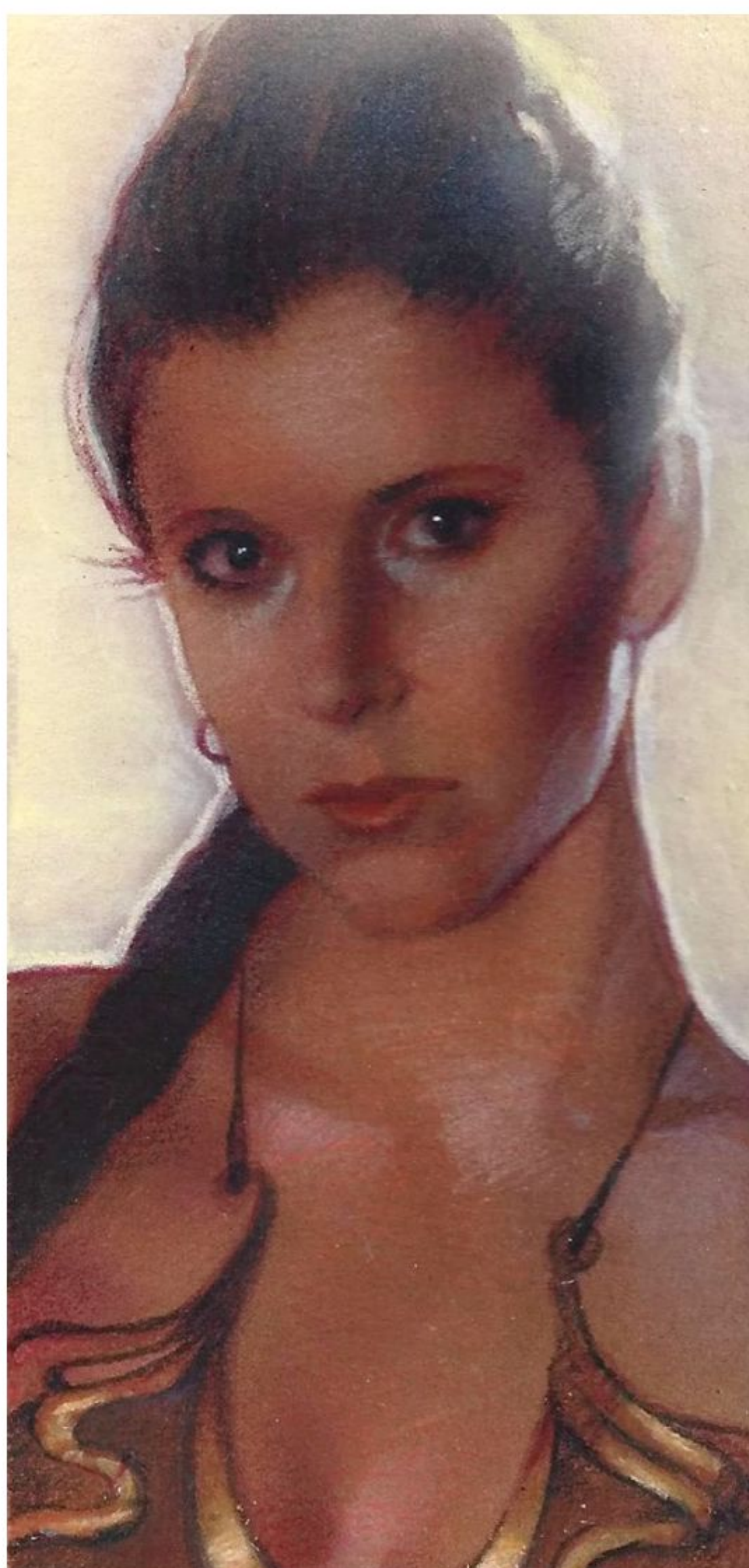
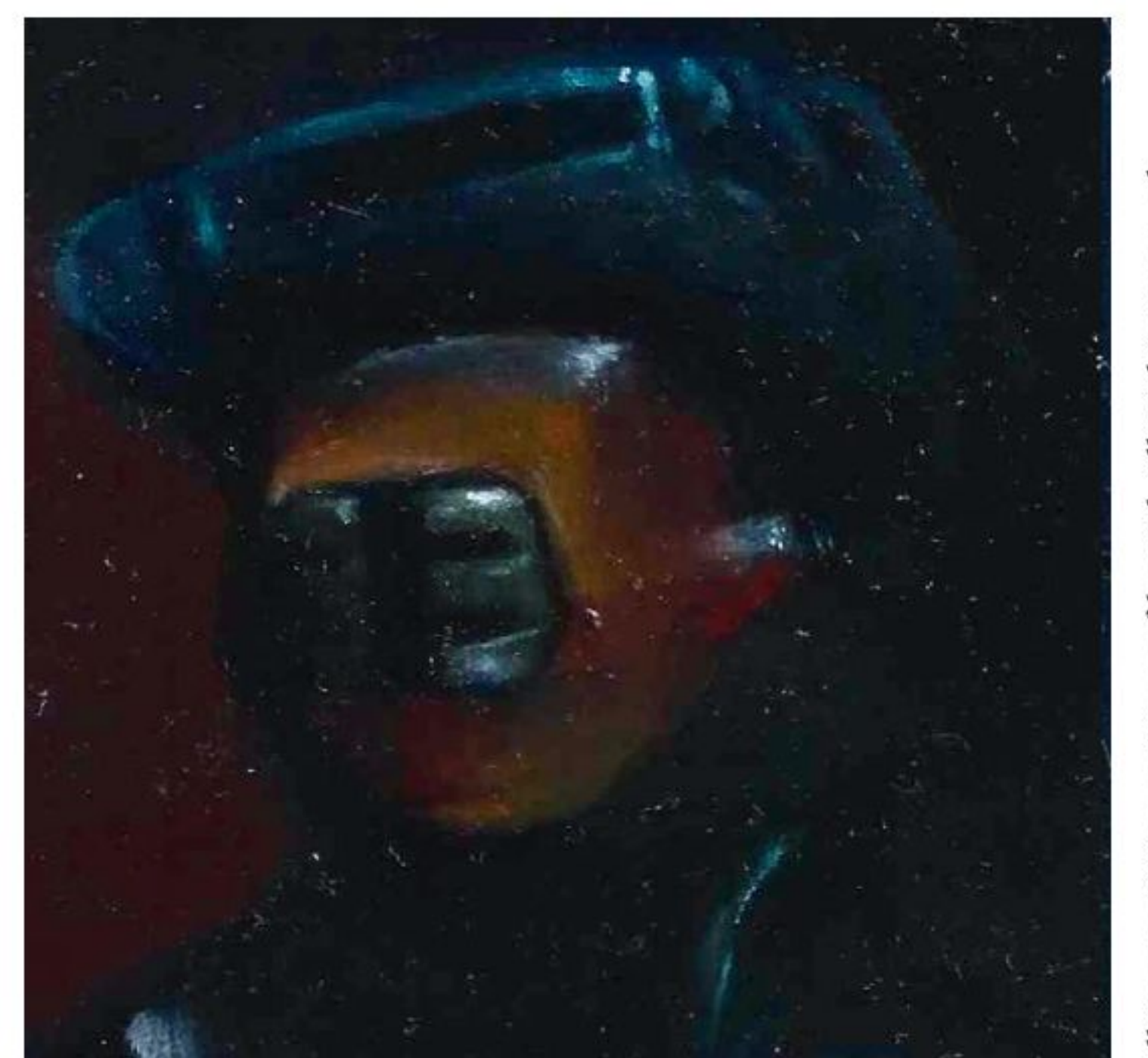
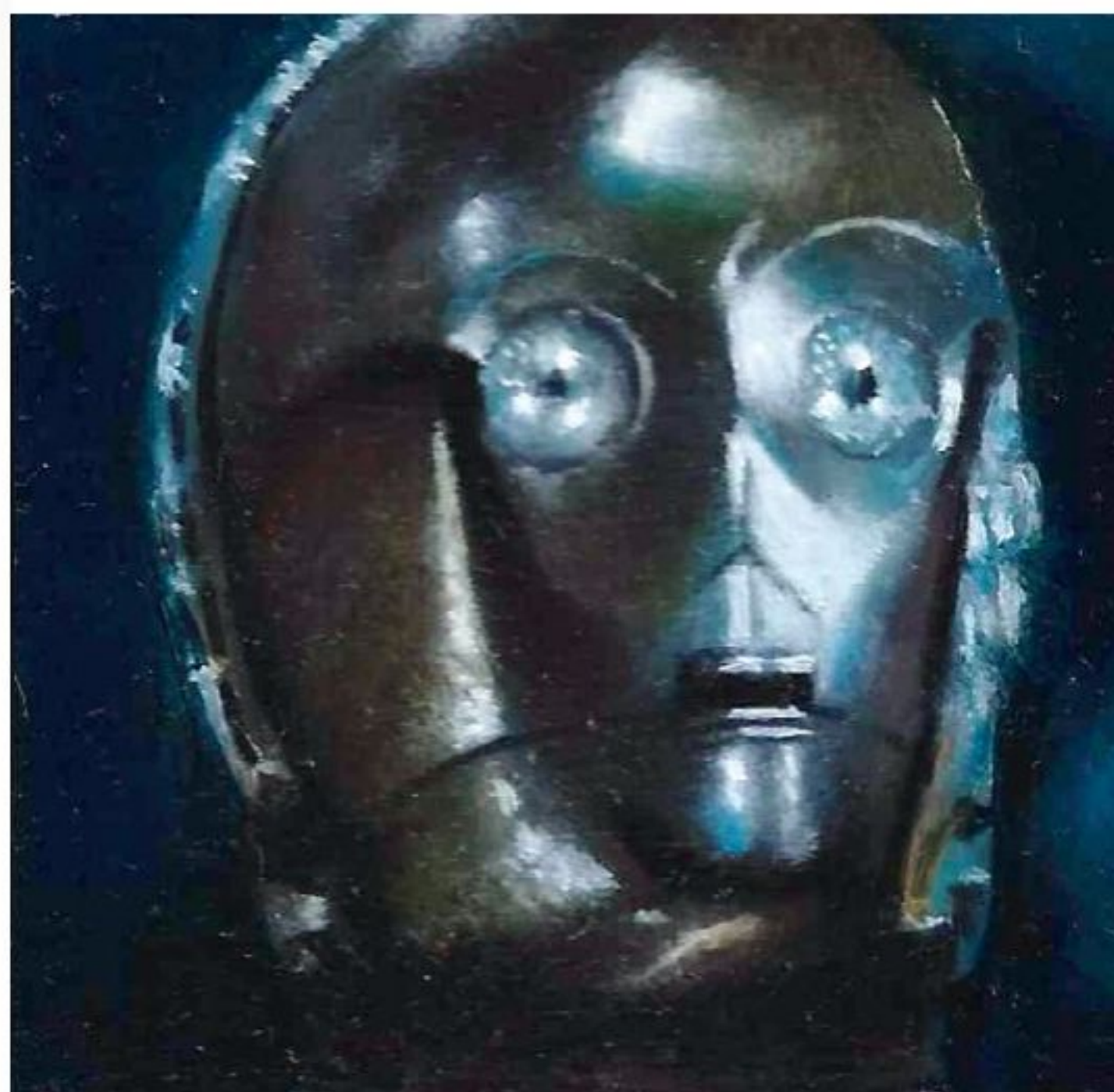
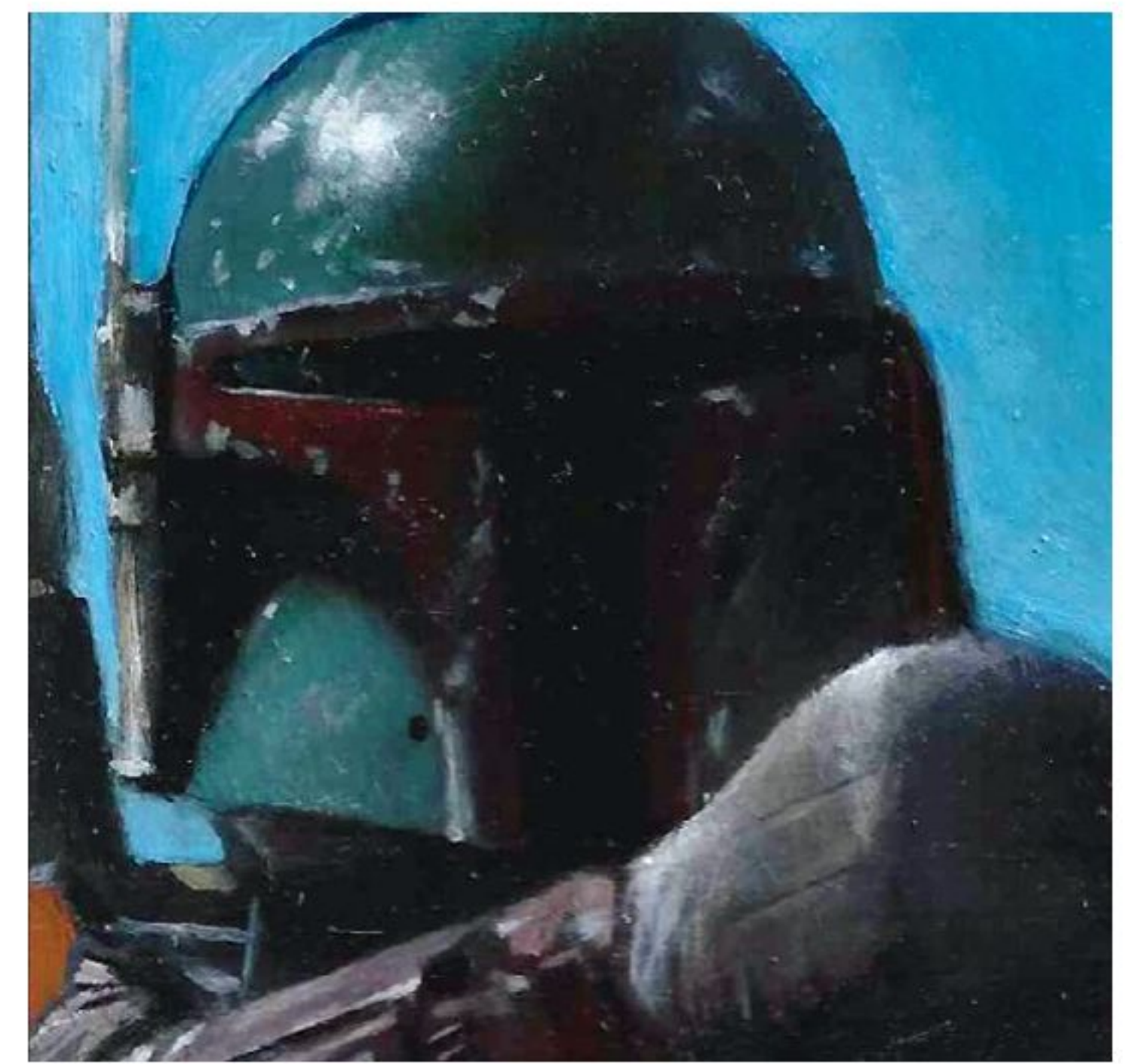
“For me Harrison Ford’s likeness is very difficult to capture. I always add extra time when I paint him”

this point that I try to establish a colour palette that I can easily refer to as the work progresses.

The steps that follow vary greatly depending on the medium I’m using and what I’m trying to achieve. If I’m working in acrylics I’ll try to refine the underdrawing because I want it to show through to the final piece. If I’m doing oil or digital painting then I’ll focus more on gradually building shapes and forms through colour because I know that the final details won’t be realised until the very end.

Who inspires you?

I find inspiration everywhere! There is so much amazing talent out there that I am constantly finding new art that really drives me to try something different. Names that have made a significant impact in my career growing up would include the classical work of Michelangelo and Da Vinci – as a child I thought I would one day have the same understanding of the human form. In school I was introduced to animators that made me realise how much I didn’t know – Milt Kahl’s work and knowledge of movement was a huge inspiration to me as I studied. Once I started doing illustrative work I found the work of



More oil painted sketch cards from the Galaxy 7 set

“An acrylic card I airbrushed for the Return of the Jedi Widevision set released by Topps”

Drew Struzan and N.C. Wyeth would constantly influence some of my own tastes and aspirations.

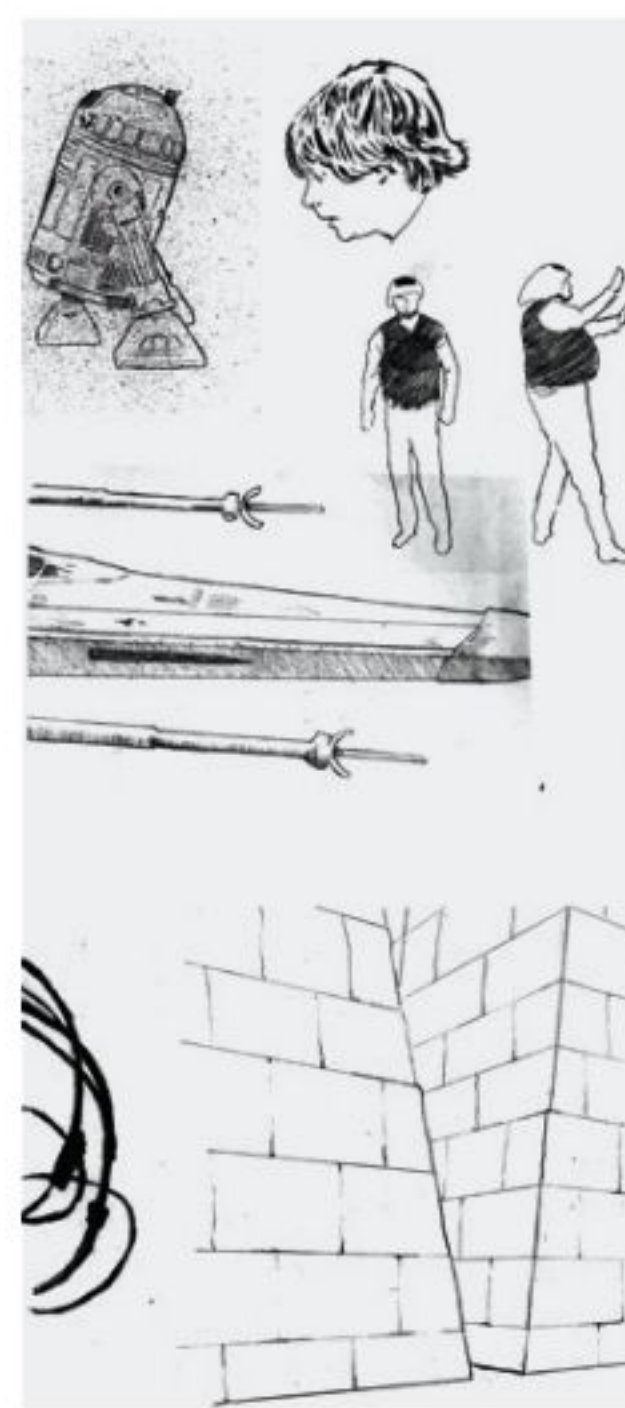
Do you have a favourite film or scene in the series?

I think the one thing Episode 1 did to near perfection was the final confrontation between Darth Maul and the two Jedi. The tempo of the action and the incredible Duel of the Fates score really resonated with me. There are a ton of scenes from Star Wars that I absolutely adore, but that scene is my favourite.

Have you been inspired by the few glimpses we've had so far of Episode 8?

Absolutely! The difficulty is that I don't know the context of the scenes. It's hard to figure out what to paint and get a feel for the characters when you don't know the story behind the images. I'm excited for what's to come, not only as an artist but as a fan because we're on the cusp of a whole new series of movies, stories and ideas! It's an electric feeling!

www.brandonkenney.com



SUITING UP

How the Celebration print evolved

From my very first rough sketch I knew I wanted to do Luke getting ready for his first flight as a member of the Rebel Alliance. Most of the details were clear in my head from the beginning, so I didn't need to thumbnail a lot of ideas.

Once I'm happy with the idea I scan the sketch and redraw it in Photoshop roughly so I can move things around or redraw elements on different layers. This is my first thoughts on a colour palette.

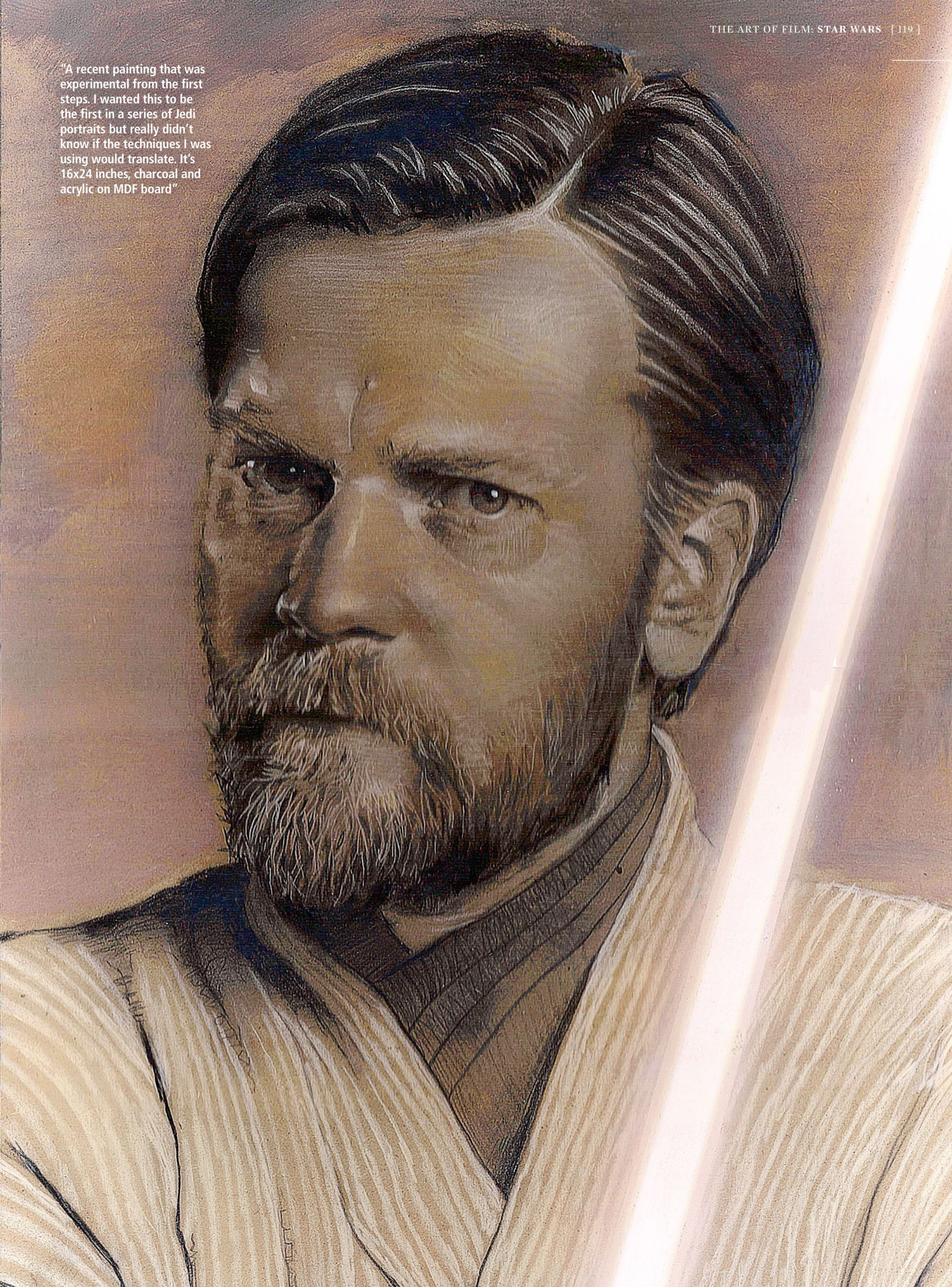
After I'm happy with the general layout and have some thoughts on colour I need to shoot some reference for the pose. I'll use anything I have available to shoot a reference shot. It doesn't have to be perfect, it's just a source to figure out lighting and the way certain materials cast shadows, bend and fold.

At this point I use all the elements I've been working on to create a tight pencil drawing. I knew I wanted the hand-drawn elements to show through the final piece.

Once I started digitally painting the sketch I realised I needed a lot more drawings, and I needed things changed. Rather than trying to mimic a pencil line on my Wacom tablet, I find it easier just to draw the elements on paper and scan them into the computer.

All the elements scanned and painted. The final artwork changed quite dramatically from the original sketch but I hope it stayed true to my original vision. It's important that I don't lose that initial feeling I wanted when the idea was first conceived.

"A recent painting that was experimental from the first steps. I wanted this to be the first in a series of Jedi portraits but really didn't know if the techniques I was using would translate. It's 16x24 inches, charcoal and acrylic on MDF board"





Rogue Leader – given a blank canvas and the entire Star Wars universe, Dave chose to capture a Luke Skywalker moment of glory



DAVE SEELEY

The favourite book cover illustrator talks about his love of the Star Wars universe

Lifelong Star Wars fan Dave Seeley can still vividly remember the moment that the film series impacted on his life. “I can still feel that guttural rumble from back in 1977, when that glorious Star Destroyer cruised into view, leaving a profound impression on my teenage brain,” he tells us. “I’d never seen anything to compare, and I was instantly hooked. The worlds, the pace, the characters, the drama – all seared into my psyche. Star Wars was the first time I’d been able to immerse myself in a science fiction paradigm and take it entirely seriously. No nod and a wink, no farce, no suspension of disbelief. Star Wars shaped my interest and defined an aesthetic direction for my work.”

It’s fitting that Dave has built a career creating immaculate book covers for the Star Wars extended universe, commissioned by Dave Stevenson at Del Rey Books. Dave Seeley cold-called the art director, who as it happened was a fan, and the work followed. As Dave Seeley tells it: “I picked up the phone and left Dave a message about coming in to see him. A short while later he phoned back: ‘Sure, come on in, I’ve got a job for you.’ Wow. And

that was the start of my work on Star Wars.”

Dave’s first book jacket was for the novel *Rebel Dream* by Aaron Allston, featuring Wedge Antilles in the cockpit of his X-wing fighter. The artist began researching the characters and vehicles but, at the time, neither had a clearly defined, consistent look (with few images of actor Denis Lawson, who played eventual cult-hero Wedge).

“The character appeared in relatively few frames in the film and was usually helmeted. The X-wing exterior was featured heavily in the film, but views within the cockpit were most always front-on. So what did it look like off to one side? I was able to invent some aspects of the control panels, and I also used Department of Defense photos of real fighter plane cockpits for ideas of what to show. It seemed important to expand on what we already knew about Wedge and his X-wing, and I was eager to add to the Star Wars canon.

“When I was commissioned to create the cover for the second book in Aaron’s duology, titled *Rebel Stand*, I chose to create a view from inside the Falcon that we hadn’t seen in the films. At this time, 3D software was still in a fledgling state and not yet the tool that I’d choose for this kind



Star Wars: Jedi Healer – most of Dave’s work for the Star Wars franchise has been for the Expanded Universe



Seeley,



Dave's stunning piece called *Galactic Conquest* captures the epic scale of the films

of thing. Instead, I worked with a plastic model kit of the Falcon and invented my own crazy interior perspective, with a view out to the ship's nose. That was a view that we hadn't ever seen in the films."

Moving forward, Dave has become a regular artist for Star Wars and its conventions. When he was invited to Celebration IV in Los Angeles, to mark the 30th anniversary of Star Wars Episode

“So much of the genre owes so much to Star Wars. It still has a freshness almost 40 years later”

IV: A New Hope, he knew which character he would paint for the show: Luke Skywalker.

"For me, the coolest aspect of Luke in the movies was his incarnation as an ace fighter pilot. I decided to show Luke in the period following the conclusion of Return of the Jedi, when he and his Rogue Squadron of X-wing fighters take on the job of rooting out the entrenched Empire from the galaxy. Prior to the convention, I emailed the finished image, called *Rogue Leader*, to Dave Stevenson, thinking that he should have first crack at using

it, given that he was the reason I was working in the Star Wars universe in the first place. Dave immediately emailed me back saying he thought he might have the perfect book for it, which turned out to be *Luke Skywalker and the Shadows of Mindor*.

"When Lucasfilm announced it as the cover image, fans on the message boards seemed pretty stoked, except for those who were disappointed that the villain of the book, Lord Shadowspawn, wasn't on the cover. I picked up the phone and gave Dave another call. What if we flipped our point of view 180 degrees when we flipped the book over, and saw what Luke saw: Lord Shadowspawn, an instant before their sabers collided? Dave loved the idea and commissioned the painting...

"I found it particularly satisfying to flesh out this spectacular villain. Shadowspawn was a character who had not yet been seen in any detail, so I was able to design him with some degree of latitude. I went for a Revolutionary War general/pirate/ninja combination, but the finishing touch was Dave Stevenson's suggestion to add his white facial tattoo."

The Star Wars universe has continued to be a source of inspiration to Dave. "It defined my early aesthetic vision for

science fiction," he says, adding: "What's more, the prequel trilogy was neatly aimed at my son's generation, so I was able to live those movies and relive the original movies through his eyes during the creation of my Star Wars illustrations. While I'm very glad I've been able to enjoy a wide variety of projects in my career, I'm thrilled to have been a part of creating the Star Wars universe."

This universe, says Dave, tapped into a common interest in sci-fi and fantasy, representing the genre in away anyone can access. "Lucasfilm then assembled a raft of talent that expanded the universe in a truly compelling visual way. So much of the genre owes so much to Star Wars. The design work was original rather than referential, so it still has a freshness almost 40 years later."

A 200-page book titled *The Art of Dave Seeley* was released in September 2015 and features a chapter on his Star Wars work. Dave is busy with a variety of work, including book covers and – wait for it – rollercoaster images for Sea World Texas, but he looks forward to new Star Wars projects. "It's been a kick to contribute to the world-building," he says, "and to design new aspects of it."

www.daveseeley.com

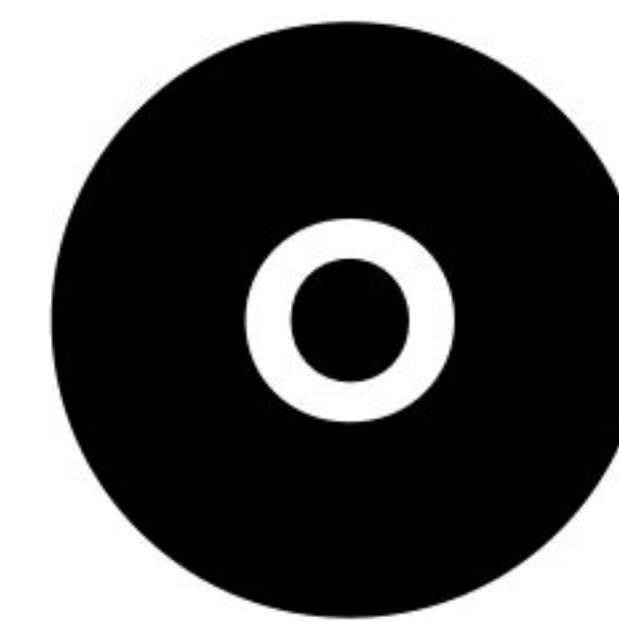


PAVEL GOLOVIY

The classically-trained painter enjoyed being able to focus on the essence instead of fussing over details...



The judges commented that "Pavel is not afraid of colour, and didn't play it safe in this Challenge" but "the guy is great with light"



ne of the five artists to receive Honourable Mention in the 2016 ILM Art Department

Challenge on ArtStation, Pavel was born in Saint Petersburg, Russia, and graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts as a painter in 2004. Almost immediately he started working as a CG artist in the game industry, which he is still doing. He mentions that his hobbies are art and scuba-diving, and his favourite places (consequently?) are his home city and coral reefs.

What do you do as a day job?

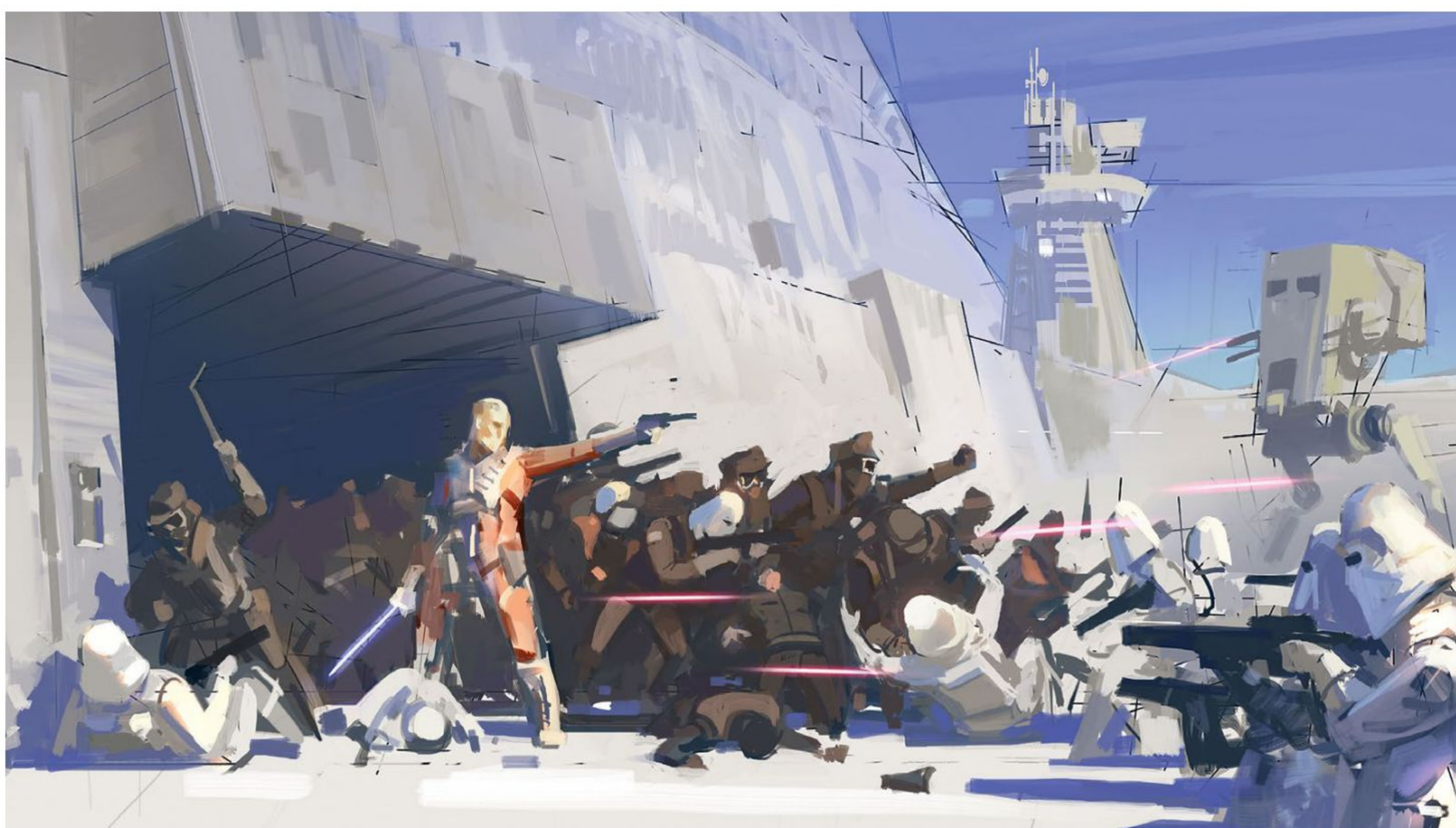
I have a part-time job in a small game development studio in Saint Petersburg where I do most of the graphic content for a given game project, excluding UI design. The studio is located in the magnificent historical centre of the city, and I love the team I work with. I also work as a freelancer, trying to keep to the type of work I like the most: illustrations, character and environment concepts.

When did you first hear about the Challenge? Were you confident about entering?

I've been a member of ArtStation for quite a long time and I knew about the Challenge right after it was announced. I rarely take part in competitions but this one was special. The fact that ILM was directing and judging the competition was a strong motivation and I entered. I had little confidence, though, and I hesitated over whether I could afford to spend that amount of time on a non-profit activity. I entered thinking "Okay, I should plague them with my works as long as I can." I didn't even read the descriptions of the prizes at that time.

You had to produce quite a lot of art for the Challenge. How did you yourself feel about the works you submitted?

There were some images that I didn't like at all even though one of them was in the "ILM favourites" list. I was quite unhappy about what I did for the final task of "The Job" part, and I published only one



The judges noted that Pavel's earlier submissions were "much tighter, but even his looser paintings had a lot of power and really interesting colour and light"

Pavel's art, the judges said, is "very cinematic, very powerful in defining moments in the story"

of the two keyframes on my own ArtStation page. I skipped the storyboard and main keyframe. I also wasn't happy with the Swana character design I did, but after a while I thought it may be an interesting addition if published together with some stronger images. Also I added some work-in-progress images. I always like to look "behind the scenes" of other artists' work and I thought my WIPs could be of interest for some viewers.

What feedback did you get, if any, from the ArtStation team and from the ILM panel of judges?

There was a generalised feedback broadcast to all the participants. It was probably the best they could do with hundreds of artists engaged in the challenge! Still it was very helpful, especially in those areas that were new to me and somewhat off my main areas of proficiency (such as vehicle design).

The idea of taking common objects and using them as a basis for vehicle design made me spend a good day in a toolshed taking photos of vises, airbrushes, chain saws and swimfins. Phrases like "Tell a story!" or "Show us something that we haven't seen before!" are now etched in my

“It was important for me to convey universal human emotions wrapped in a Star Wars setting”

mind forever. And almost always there was something like "Some of you are nailing it!" and you start reviewing your work again and again, trying to understand if you are among those lucky ones who nailed it.

The task descriptions were often supplied using classical art references like a Louis David painting or a Kurosawa movie, and that is what I have a soft spot for. Overall the feedback was very professional and inspiring, and even its vagueness I perceived as a kind of an artistic freedom, which I enjoyed very much!

What was it about the Star Wars universe that you tried to capture in your art?

I watched the classic trilogy when



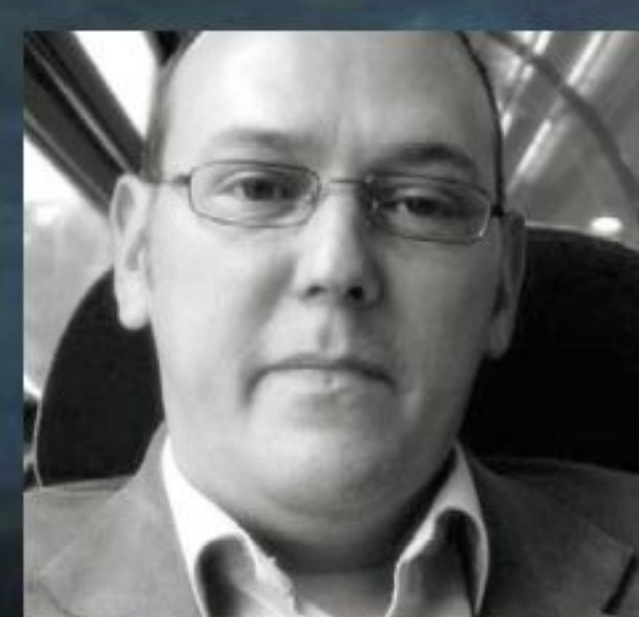
I was a child, and the Star Wars universe has some nostalgia flavour for me. I am definitely a fan. But, truth be told, I am not the kind of person who knows every aspect of the Star Wars world and would spend his free time on doing fan art. I often used sources like Wookieepedia to learn more about various aspects of the universe.

I was very surprised that every single character or creature has its name and story. In my works I was more focused on secondary characters and almost never used key figures like Leia or Han Solo. Imagining the story featuring Tusken Raiders or Jawas seemed to me more engaging.

www.pgoloviy.com







ANDREW MARCH

You don't suppose his surname explains
Andrew's aptitude for walkers, do you?



A

ndrew March is a professional artist who works in both 3D and 2D software, and although he describes himself as a hobbyist, he has freelanced for some lighting and animation projects – experience that came the fore when he was creating his inspired scene of AT-AT Walkers.

“I remember seeing them in the cinema when *Empire Strikes Back* was first released and just thinking how intimidating they were. I wanted to try and recreate that feeling,” says Andrew, who goes on to reveal that the image

had its challenges: “I guess it’s creating a sense that you are looking at a lumbering metal giant – portraying that sense of scale and weight can be difficult.”

Andrew’s image began as 2D sketches, then he took these ideas into Lightwave 3D for surfacing, lighting, landscaping, and setting up the models... “and it’s at this point that the original sketch goes out the window and the 3D scene takes on a life of its own,” he laughs. “Then it’s rendering, and finally it’s Photoshop for a little post work. Ha, sounds easy when I say it like that!”

www.andrewmarch.artstation.com



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CAT STAGGS
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CAT STAGGS

The comics artist talks about her series of propaganda posters

Probably best known for her art for DC Comics and on Star Trek for IDW, Cat has also created Star Wars cards for Lucasfilm since 2004 and a series of distinctive Celebrations posters (six so far) in the style of wartime posters. "I am a big fan of propaganda art from the '40s," she explains. "I thought it would be fun to combine them with the war aspect of the Star Wars films. Playing with the juxtaposition of the vintage with the future was a very appealing challenge for me."

Why does Star Wars keep driving artists to create new work?

I can't answer for anyone but myself. For me, there are so many worlds, people and creatures to play with, it almost feels like an endless playground of inspiration. 40 years' worth of material, and now we are adding new elements. It is incredibly exciting.

Do you have a favourite poster artist who has inspired you?

I'm a big fan of design and layout, and the movie posters of the '50s-'70s are some of my favourites. Artist like Bob Peak and Robert McGinnis were standouts for me, as well as

illustrators from the '30s-'40s-'50s like Rockwell, Leyendecker, Maguire, and so many more from that era.

Can you tell us a little of how you work? What is your process?

It tends to be very research intensive before I even put pencil to paper, especially for these propaganda pieces. I want to make sure they convey the

“I want to convey the emotion of the moment as well as a vintage feel and inject a little humour if I can”

emotion of the moment as well as the vintage feel of the era. I am also a fan of injecting a little humour if I can. I can spend weeks working out the piece in my head before I ever get started on the illustration.

Is it hard to find a unique take on such familiar characters?

No. Because the world of Star Wars is so vast and so developed but we have seen only so much,



Above: the prelim for the third in Cat's propaganda poster series (opposite)

it leaves the door wide open, to a degree, for taking the characters to the unseen moments.

What makes a great character like those in Star Wars work?

They are incredibly relatable and not so far removed that the audience cannot connect with them. Even a two-ton space slug had our attention!

Are you a Star Wars fan?

From the moment that Star Destroyer flew over my head in 1977.

Do you have a favourite Star Wars poster or image that you've done?

That is a hard question. I like them all for various reasons. Do I look back on older pieces and wish the execution was better? Sure, but I still like what was created. I will say though that the propaganda series has been the most fun, and I look forward to working on new pieces.

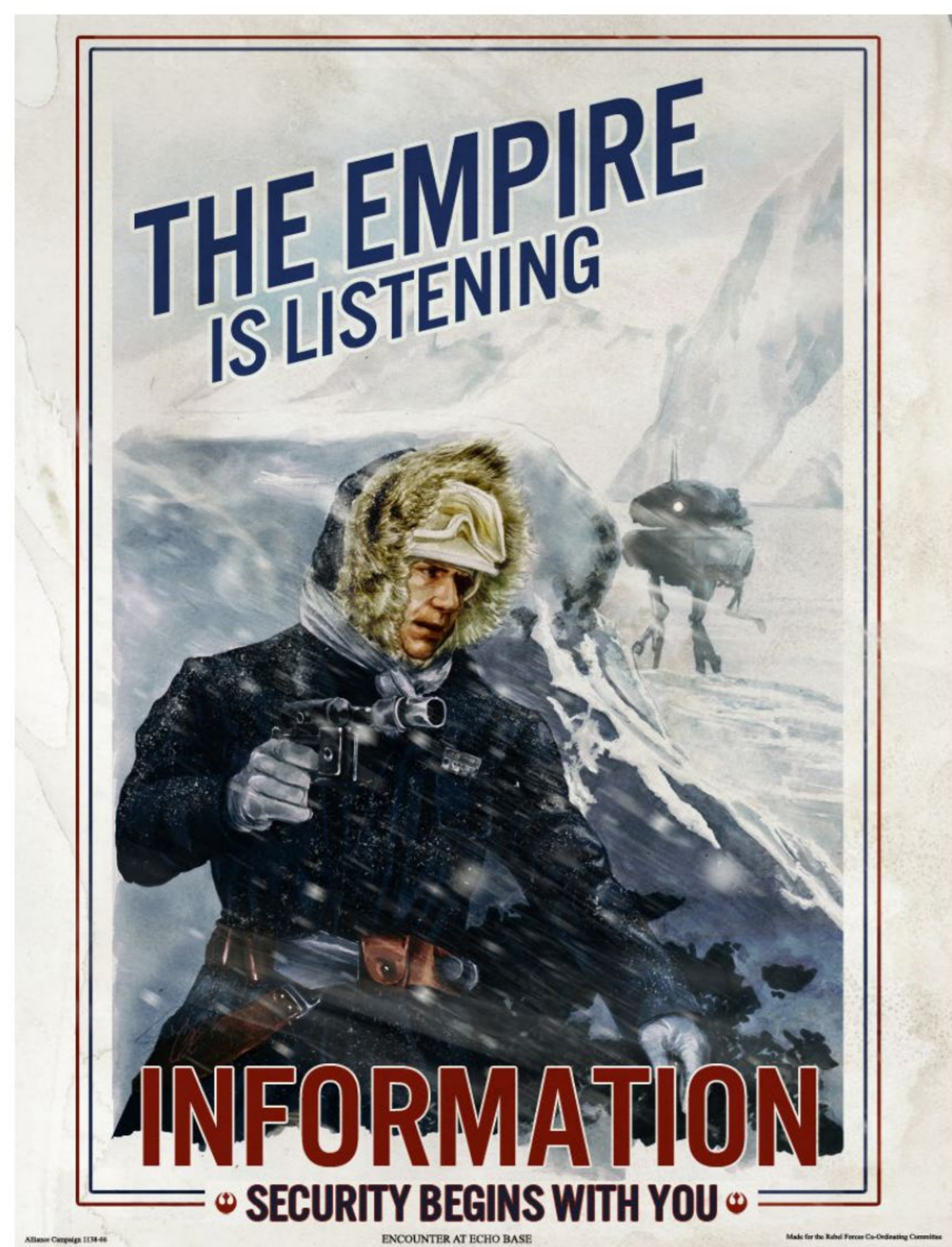
Do you have any future projects you can reveal – any new posters or clothing designs?

Nothing I can talk about just yet.

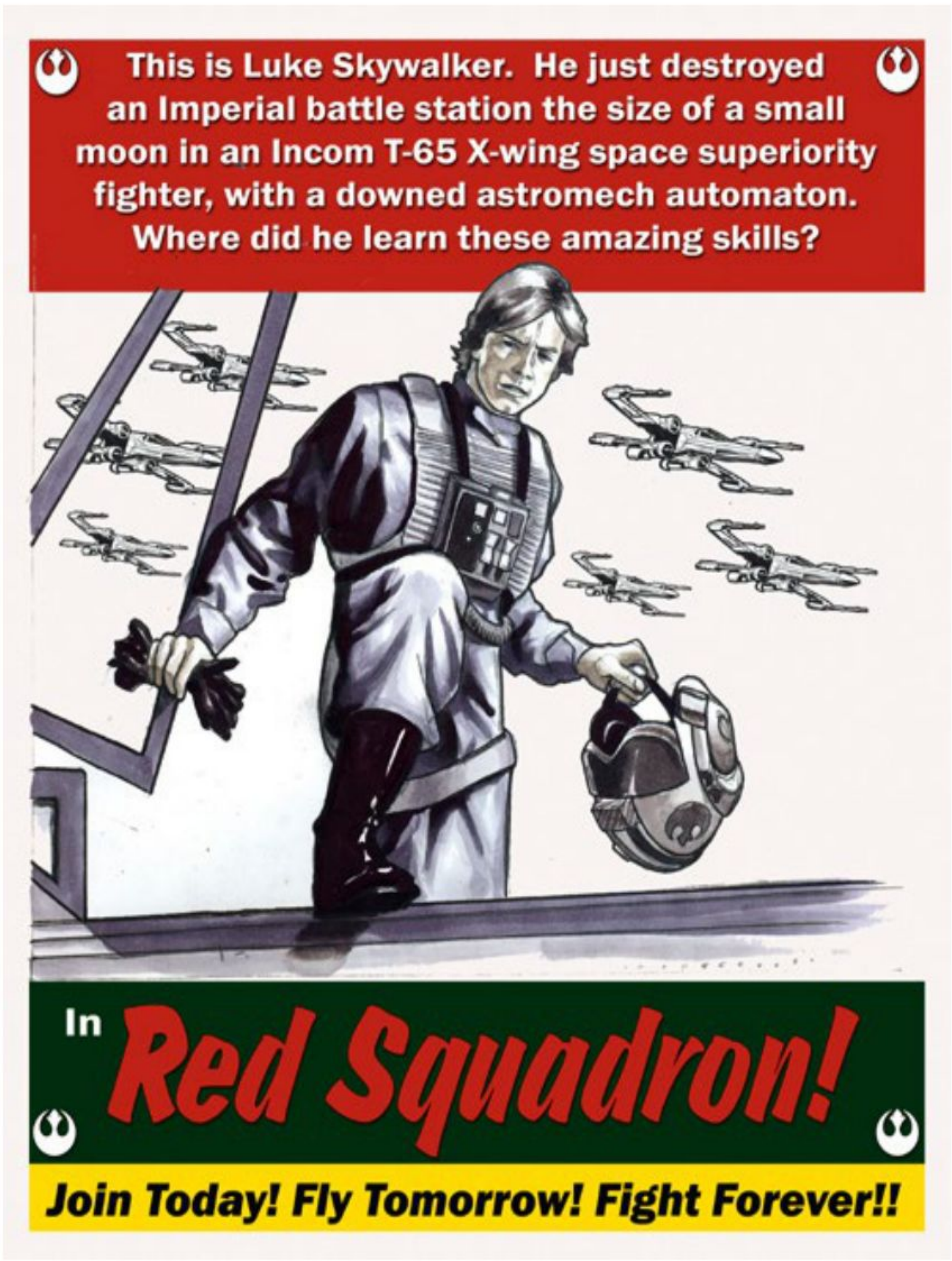
Finally, how excited are you about the new film?

Extremely!

www.catstaggs.com



A display of Cat's versatility, from a convention badge in the style of a pulp novel cover to her Obi-Wan Kenobi Clone Wars trading card artwork for Topps, plus (top left) a study sketch



This is Luke Skywalker. He just destroyed an Imperial battle station the size of a small moon in an Incom T-65 X-wing space superiority fighter, with a downed astromech automaton. Where did he learn these amazing skills?

In Red Squadron!
Join Today! Fly Tomorrow! Fight Forever!!



This is Luke Skywalker. He just destroyed an Imperial battle station the size of a small moon in an Incom T-65 X-wing space superiority fighter, with a damaged astromech automaton. Where did he learn these amazing skills?

In Red Squadron!
Join Today! Fly Tomorrow! Fight Forever!!

Spirit of '77 was the first of Cat's propaganda poster series. Top right is the prelim, then anti-clockwise some progress shots of the final marker rendering, and at right the final poster





SIMON GOINARD

Even with clients ranging from Disney to Aston Martin, Simon paints a pitch piece



Simon titled this striking piece “Apprentice” but it clearly reflects his expertise as an illustrator and concept artist

F

rench-born concept artist and production illustrator Simon Goinard has always loved Ralph McQuarrie’s work on the original Star Wars trilogy, “not only because it’s beautiful and inventive, but because it helped a lot

to sell the concept of the first film too.” For him, he says, “it’s the perfect example of what pitch design should be, so I just wanted to bring back that feel with a piece, trying to cross a Star Wars pitch piece with a bit of McQuarrie and a bit of my moody style.”

Did you try anything new on this painting?

Technically speaking no, it’s just my usual approach to personal pieces. I just kind of paint and think at the same time. I knew the feel I wanted in the end, but still a lot of things evolved – the Jedi became a Sith; the scene focus changed too, with more protagonists, etc.

What was the aim or mood you were looking for in the image?

It was designed to be a pitch piece, so it had to be

dynamic and represent the essence of the films – galactic wars and the fight between good and bad, pretty clear intents. And then I tried to bring in that Greek tragedy feeling too, with the [character’s] robes for example, or the fact that the main character seems to be breaking the fourth wall and looking at us like we’re an audience in a theatre.

What is it about Star Wars that inspired this?

I’m a huge fan of the mid-’70s, I must say. The sci-fi feel in society, the music, the design was pretty awesome. Star Wars is part of that too – that’s what I like about it: all these ideas are combined in this cultural phenomenon that is the movie.

It feels like this is a very romanticised vision of Star Wars. Was this intentional?

Yes, totally. Again like a Greek myth, Star Wars is pretty romanticised itself, and as I intended the piece to be pitch work it had to be too!

www.simongoinard.com

Darth Maul
actor Ray Park
actually posed
for Sith Rocks





RANDY MARTINEZ

First noticed for his humorous work, the artist revels in the scope of Star Wars...

When asked what it is that inspires his interpretations of Star Wars, Randy Martinez replies: "My memories. I was three when Star Wars came out in 1977. I remember going, but not a whole lot of the film, nothing clear anyway. But the imagery stuck with me. I was fascinated. With my Star Wars art, I try to bring that same excitement and magic that I felt when I was a kid. As adults we become a lot more cynical because life just tends to do that to you. But as children, life is just fun and all about wonder and imagination. So when I paint, I want to relive those feelings over and over again. Hopefully, the finished product gives the viewer the same experience."

Why does Star Wars keep driving artists to create new work?

You mean besides a paycheck? You know every artist would give you a different answer, and that's kind of what makes Star Wars so

special. There's so much room to be creative and apply your style or ideas to the art. Star Wars has action, adventure, romance, fantasy and just about every other genre there is, even Greek

“There’s so much room to be creative and add your ideas. In Star Wars there’s something for everyone”

mythology. So, in Star Wars there seems to be something for everyone. I like to believe most artists create from within, and they create what they are connected to. Star Wars is a huge part of our culture, and most fans, no matter what age, have grown up with Star Wars in their lives in some way. So, it is very easy to feel connected to Star Wars in some way.

What comes first, a character or a concept (Darth Maul rockin' out)?

For me, the concept definitely comes first. I like to tell stories or make statements with my art. It's not enough for me to just draw Boba Fett just standing there with his gun. That is really boring. I want to say something and provide an emotion.

There are limitless ways to do that, and I'm always coming up with things to say, jokes to tell, or ideas to share. So say with Sith Rocks with Darth Maul rocking out, I actually came up with the idea to do an homage to one of my favourite Star Wars illustrations ever, Star Wars Rocks by Hugh Flemming. I am a musician as well, so I loved this piece, and I always wanted to do something in the same mashup idea of Star Wars and rock-'n'-roll. However, I wanted to put my own spin to it and put in a lot of jokes and gags. I am huge Mad magazine fan from way back, so I am often inspired by the likes of Jack Davis, Mort Drucker and Sergio Aragonez. I knew I wanted

Randy is a great fan of mixed media – yes, that background behind Leia really is some old comic book pages



to do something exciting, so I thought of the Kiss rock shows, and I automatically thought, wow, “Kiss” sounds like “Sith”. From there it was just a matter of putting the right personality with the right instrument. Darth Maul would totally be a lead guitarist. It helped that I am friends with Darth Maul actor Ray Park, so he was kind enough to pose for me!

Tell us a bit about how you work.

I don’t really have a set process. Every piece of art is different, depending on what the art will be used for. I use just about every medium there is, depending on the job, and that is a large factor in how I will approach the art.

I sketch, I work in the computer, I sketch more, then get to the painting, but sometimes I start prepping while I’m sketching. I’m all over the place.

How does Lucasfilm react to some of your humour paintings?

They love it. Doing Star Wars humour is how I got started making official Star Wars art, 16 years ago, so they are very used to my style of humour. Lucasfilm knows I can paint them a super tight illustration or do something funny, which has been good for me. Steve Sansweet once called me “the Swiss army knife of Star Wars artists,” and that title has kind of stayed with me.

I love when Lucasfilm lets me be funny with Star Wars because there is so much to be funny with. Star Wars is an endless supply of jokes and gags!

How are the Legacy paintings created? Do you have a favourite?

The Legacy is very dear to my heart because it was kind of a turning point in my career. I had reached a point where I was bored with just drawing and painting. So I started to collage real comic books, and then I started painting over that. I really liked the newsprint and the comic book ink as my backdrop. It’s a lot more than just cutting up old comics and placing them anywhere – I really take my time to not only build a solid colour composition, but also to sort of tell a story or create a mood.

I have created about 25 of these pieces of Marvel, DC and Star Wars characters. Right now, only the Marvel pieces are available as prints: Spider-Man, Iron Man and Captain America. It’s hard to pick a favourite; they all have a different experience for me.

Are you a Star Wars fan?

Absolutely, I’m an Original fan. I saw all three movies in the theatres when they came out. I’ve collected Star Wars toys, cards,



Randy has depicted probably every Episode and beyond, but the original trilogy remains his favourite

art, everything. And while I don't collect anything anymore, I still love to look at and play with Star Wars toys.

It's been a dream come true to actually be part of Star Wars, doing official art for Lucasfilm for 16 years. It's still a wow for me, even just saying that. I'm very fortunate to have the opportunity to make my living creating art of one of my favourite things ever. I'm honoured and it's the greatest experience I've ever had.

Do you have a favourite Star Wars painting or project you've done?

No favourites. Every piece is a different experience. I put everything into each painting – where I am in life, how I feel, and what is inspiring me at the time. Each piece is like my own little time capsule. Lucasfilm has given me so many opportunities to create big, very important pieces of art, it would be impossible to pick just one as my favourite. But, I will tell you that one of the most special pieces I created was the key art for Star Wars Celebration Europe in 2007, better known as Sgt. Lucas. It's one of the few 3D sculptures I have ever done, so it was a challenge. Two of my favourite things in life is Star Wars and the Beatles, so to be able to mash the two up was pure joy!

What made creating this piece so special was that my girlfriend (Star Wars artist Denise Vasquez) and my Mom helped me create this piece. I love collaborative art, and it was fun sharing this experience with my family.

Which is the hardest character to get “just right”?

None. I don't mean that in an arrogant way at all. Nothing in this world is hard to create because of the hard work I have put in on

“Anybody can learn to draw or paint anything, but you have to be willing to put in the time and the work”

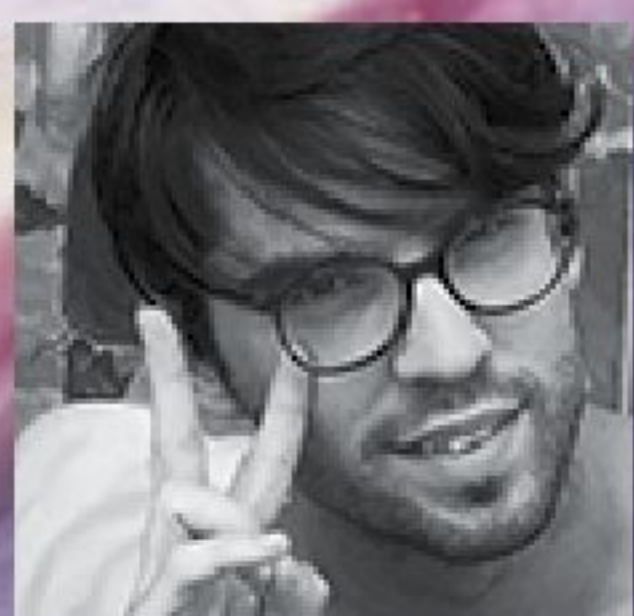
my fundamentals. I've had great instructors and mentors in art, and they have helped me understand how to paint and draw anything in this world or that I can imagine. The truth is anybody can learn to draw or paint anything, but you have to be willing to put in the time and the work. Art is a lifelong journey that you can never master. It is not about getting something

“just right” in terms of there being right or wrong, it's about getting it just the way you want to paint it or draw it as an artist. It's taken me 41 years to get where I am in my journey. The challenges come from deadlines. Can you create quality art in the time you are given? Sometimes I get jobs where I only have a few days to complete it. That's tough, because I have to create art in a short time that looks just as good as a piece I've had months to work on.

Do you get inspired by trailers and previews of new Episodes? Do they make you get working?

You know, I saw the trailers [for Episode 7: The Force Awakens], and they were very exciting. But the latest and most exciting trailer came out at Star Wars Celebration, where I was running my booth. There was so much going on selling art, making contacts and doing interviews that I had not really had time to let it all sink in. With that said, I have some ideas, but I want to first get to know some of the new characters better and formulate something I want to say or express through the art. At the same time, I also just want to enjoy it as a fan. Because that's where it all starts!

www.randymartinez.net



ANDREW THEOPHILOPOULOS

The illustrator dressed up and used photo references to paint an image that captures a film he hadn't seen yet...



Andrew lives and works in his lighthouse in Florida's Sarasota Bay area, freelancing in film, games and TV as well as publishing. This illustration was commissioned as a matched pair of promotional magazine covers before the release of Star Wars Episode VII: The Force Awakens. "When asked to make not one but two cover illustrations for an

unreleased film," Andrew recalls, "I found the idea of digging through the minuscule amount of official Force Awakens imagery troubling – even more so when the female character of my commission [was] a relatively unknown actress with little to offer in terms of portrait photography.

"What about painting the portrait of a stealthy Sith, who only appears in the dark in the trailers? How on Earth – or in the galaxy for that matter – does one

create a picture resembling two future icons? What I wouldn't give to be on the level of Drew Struzan, who's had the tremendous opportunity to meet the cast and have them pose for some of the most iconic film posters out there!

"I spent \$20 on thrift shop supplies to dress as Kylo Ren, and my partner as Rey. My photo shoot was the starting point of a lengthy push and pull of pixels."

www.andrewtheo.com



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ANAHEIM 2015
STAR WARS
CELEBRATION

Karen's 2015 Celebration poster features all three of her favourite characters – Amidala, Leia and (subtly) R2-D2



KAREN HALLION

Her website describes her as “artist, illustrator, and part-time Jedi...”

Self-confessed “pretty geeky artist” Karen Hallion reveals that it wasn’t until she was 16 and saw the movie *The Little Mermaid* that she became interested in being an artist. “I walked out of the theatre and thought ‘I want to do that,’” she recalls. “I went to Ringling School of Art and Design in Sarasota, Florida, and graduated with a BFA in Illustration. I spent years trying get an art-related job or freelance, and failed miserably. One thing led to another and I wound up as an art teacher for two elementary schools, teaching grades Kindergarten to Fifth. I loved it – it was fantastic. Lots of glitter and watercolours and pipe cleaners. But I lost my job in 2009 and decided to give an art career another shot. It was kind of a sink or swim moment for me... and I am still swimming. Knock on wood!”

Where did the idea come from to mix Star Wars and Mucha?

I had a print of *La Dame Aux Camélias* by Mucha hanging over my desk for years. I love Alphonse Mucha – I am in awe of his linework. This particular print always reminded me of Leia, and I thought it would be fun to do an homage to it with a Star

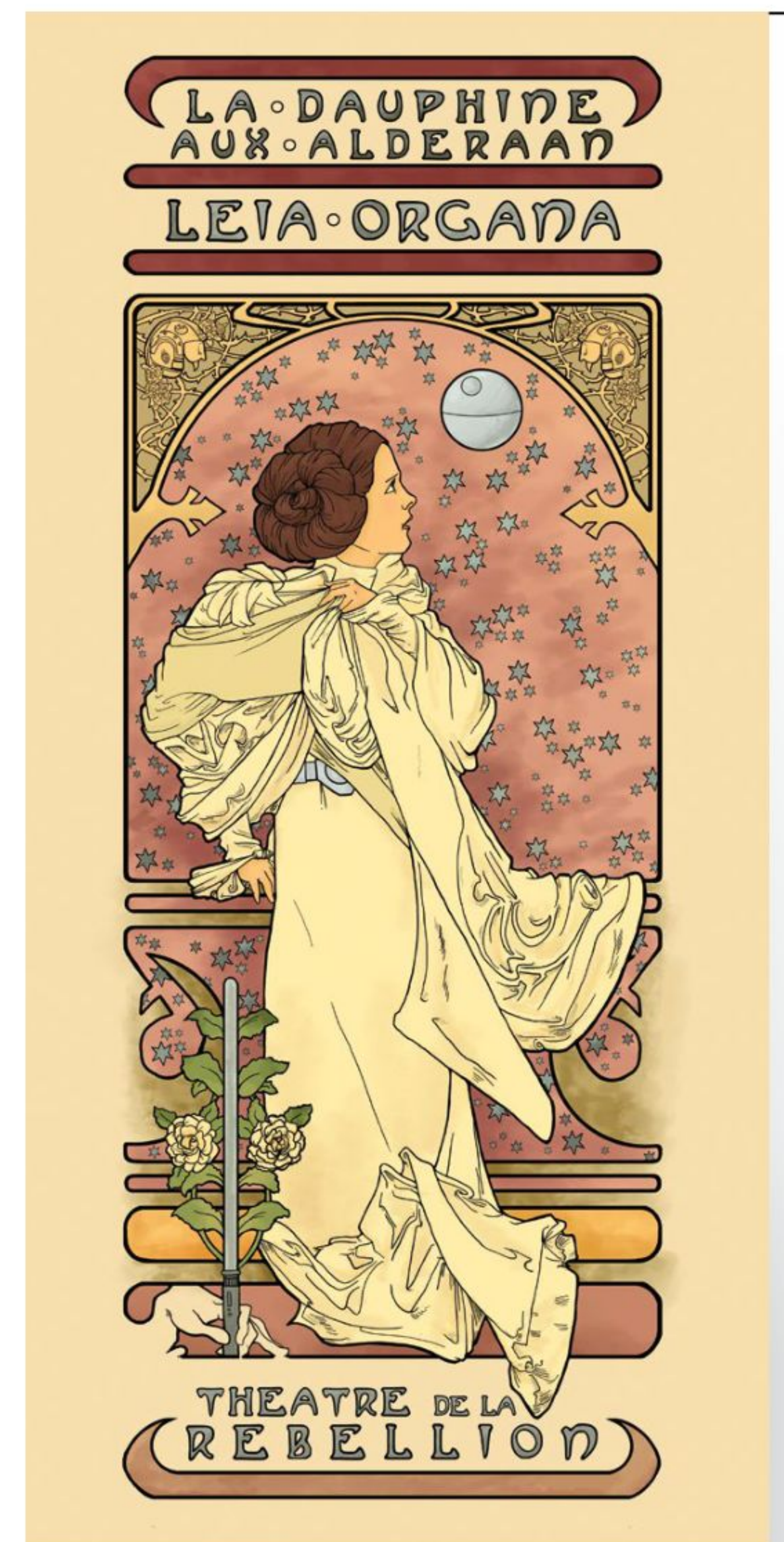
Wars twist. Leia is such a strong character, always in the front and in charge. I wanted to show her in a more quiet, pensive moment. Also, combining Art Nouveau and pop culture can be so much fun – there are so many ways to hide little details in the illustrations.

How long does a piece like *La Dauphine Aux Alderaan* take?

Well, that one was back when I didn’t have a tablet. I had a laptop with a touchpad and very basic Photoshop skills. I drew it out on paper with pencil, scanned it in, then did the lines and colour in Photoshop. Took me *forever*. 40-50 hours, maybe? Now I have a Cintiq, and my Photoshop skills are better. Something like that would take me more like 20-25 hours these days – partly because of the Cintiq making work move more swiftly, partly because I know my way around Photoshop now, and mostly because I’ve been drawing so much the last five years, it comes a lot more naturally these days. Sometimes, someone will say to me “You make it look so easy!” But it was 20 years of struggle and stubbornness to get there, and there are still days when a drawing just won’t cooperate.

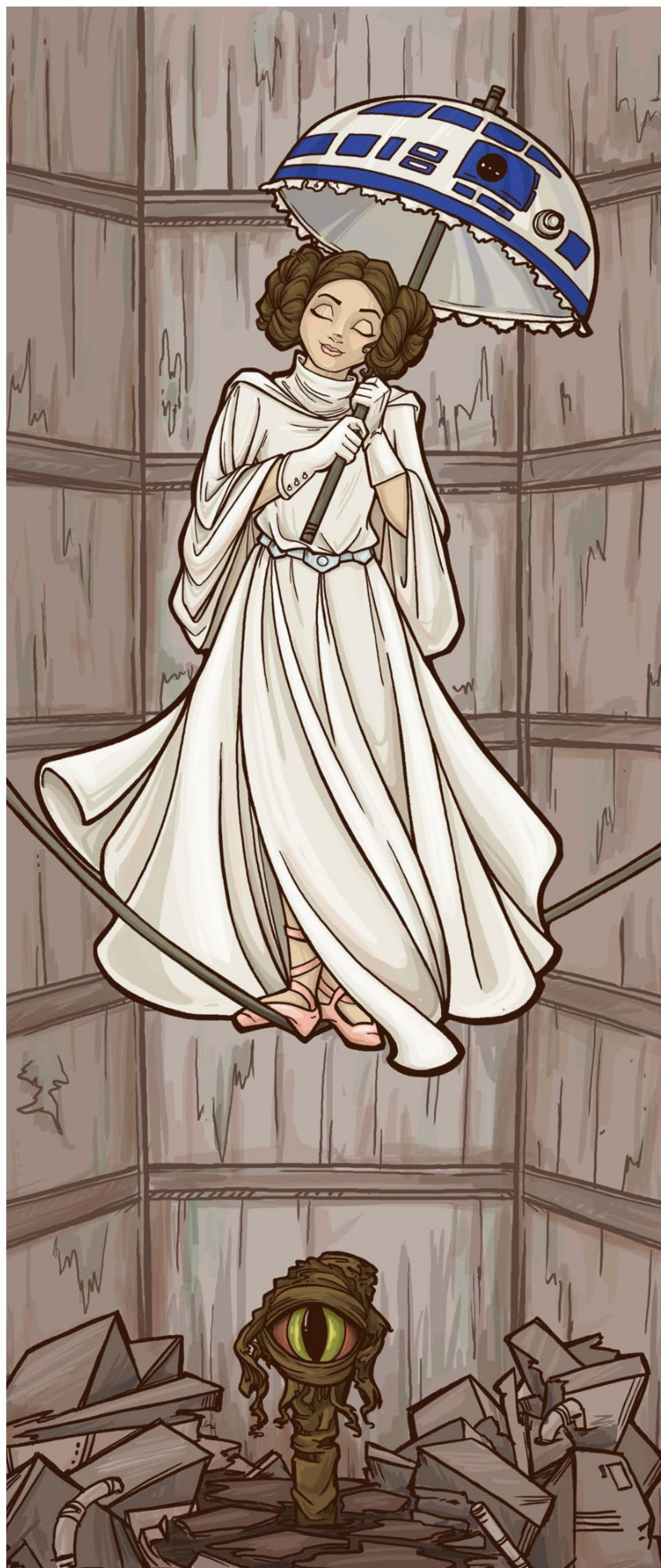
Can you tell us a little about your workflow and creative process?

Karen’s Art Nouveau Leia poster brought her to notice and remains one of her personal favourites



“Combining Art Nouveau with pop culture is fun, and there are so many ways to hide little details”

Usually I start with a very rough, flowy, loose sketch with a blue coloured pencil brush in Photoshop. Then I reduce the opacity, add another layer and sketch again, fixing issues with proportion, adding little bits of detail but skill keeping it pretty rough. Then, reduce opacity, add another layer, and keep doing that for a while until I’m happy with how it looks. Next, I “ink” it digitally. I usually go over all the lines first with about the same line weight. Then I go back and



Karen's painting
Leia's Corruptible
Mortal State riffs
off the Disney
Haunted Mansion
Tightrope Girl



“ In general, I struggle with drawing men. I don't know why, but drawing women comes much easier to me ”

add a heavier line around the big basic shapes, a very Alphonse Mucha type thing to do. Then I really zoom in and add subtle line weight, some curves where two lines might meet, smoothing things out. I spend a lot of time on the line, really. Then I start laying in big basic colour, keeping everything on different layers so they are easy to play around with and find the right colour combinations. And finally, I add shading, highlights, etc. Trying to figure out when and if it's actually

done is always the hardest part, knowing when to stop!

What have been the biggest influences on your art?

Definitely Disney, in particular Glen Keane. The flow of his art, the movement, what he is able to express in just a few gestures – it's inspiring. Obviously Alphonse Mucha for his line and beautiful Art Nouveau backgrounds. I love Charles Dana Gibson, also for his linework. I am a big ol' pop-culture geek, and I draw what I love. So, what I read, watch or listen to usually makes its way into my work. A lot of the more popular things like Star Wars or Doctor Who, but also I love doing a little more obscure designs. I recently did an illustration of Dottie from

League of their Own, and it was such fun to have so many fans get excited about that and start posting quotes on my page.

Actually, I have a quote from that movie hanging over my desk, because I feel like it is so fitting for art: "It's supposed to be hard. If it wasn't hard, everyone would do it. The hard is what makes it great."

Do you have a favourite Star Wars character and why?

My favorite character to *draw* would be Queen Amidala. Her wardrobe, hairstyles, her face... It's just so fascinating and detailed and gorgeous. I could draw her over and over again and never get bored. But Leia is and always will be my favourite character.



The Haunted Galaxy series is a mashup of iconic Star Wars characters with Haunted Mansion

Her strength, leadership, bravery and intelligence make her a great role model for women and girls. And I am a sucker for all her witty banter with Han.

Who's the hardest character to get "just right"?

In general, I struggle with drawing men. I don't know why, but drawing women comes much easier to me. So, whenever I have to draw a male character, stress levels rise. For me, Han Solo has to be the trickiest. He's attractive, but not in any sort of traditional way. Getting that smirk just right can be challenging.

R2-D2 turns up quite often in your work. Is he a favourite of yours?

After Leia, he would be my favourite, yes. It's amazing to me

that with just a series of beeps and little noises, he has such a distinct personality. I used him to tie together the background in my Celebration piece, because he was important to both Amidala and Leia. When I was at MegaCon [in Orlando, Florida, in April 2015], R2 came by my table to visit, courtesy of the R2 Builders club. I was thrilled – I wanted to take him home with me.

Did you have a good time at Star Wars Celebration 2015?

I had an amazing show. I've been doing conventions for a few years now, and have been lucky enough to do great shows like SDCC, NYCC, Emerald City, C2E2, etc. But there was just something in the air at Celebration, this excitement and energy, especially on that first day

after everyone saw the new teaser trailer. And to be included with such an insanely talented and skilled group of artists was an immense honour. It is a big goal of mine now to continue to push myself improve my work and get included in Star Wars Celebration shows for as long as I can.

Your piece for Celebration Europe 2016, titled Strength, features six leading female characters in the canon, with Rey front and centre...

It started off as a quick sketch last year, with only three women. I re-sketched it this year to add Padme, Leia and Rey. I struggled a lot with Rey's face, right up until the deadline.

www.karenhallion.tumblr.com



JOSH VIER

The art director shares his personal projects inspired by Star Wars



concept artist Josh Viers loves movies. So much so, he'll often take a scene from a favourite film and use it as the starting point for a painting. It needs to be chosen carefully, of course: "Just because you love *Clueless* doesn't mean it'll be a good starting point for your art," he quips. "Pick a movie that was lauded by critics for its look – a film with great cinematography.

"For example, I know that using a Coen Brothers film as the launch point is a safe bet because Roger Deakins acts as director of photography for most of their

films. If I can emulate Roger's work then I'm heading in the right direction. My end result will often be very different from what I started with, but with a solid foundation and good inspiration it's hard to go wrong."

Recently, Josh reveals, he has also started using 3D as part of his process. "I've found it's invaluable in composing a scene. With even the simplest 3D elements I'm able to define and compose my space in a way that makes it tangible." The moody cinematic moment on this page was achieved in part by painting over 3D models.

Josh's career itself has included many disciplines. While studying

In a painting inspired by *Once Upon a Time in the West*, a desperate Empire once again bargains with bounty hunters

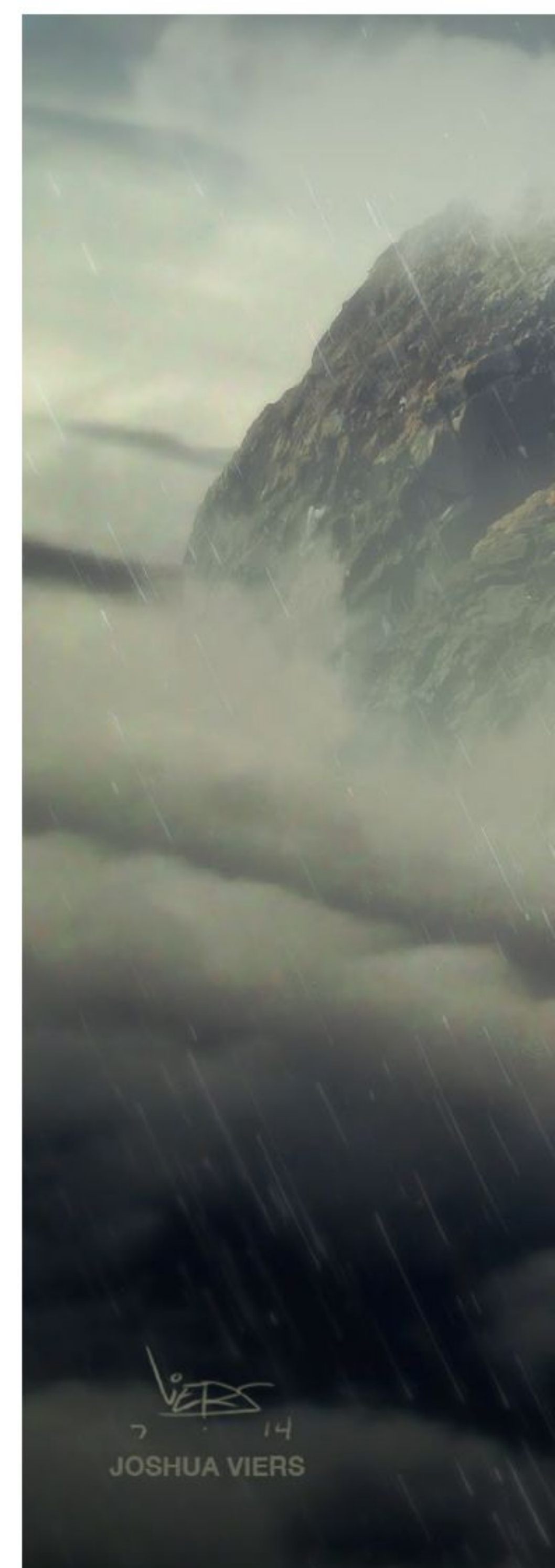


“I took a scene with its brilliant framing and repurposed it, which is kind of what George Lucas originally did”

at the University of Cincinnati he had the opportunity to design toys for Hasbro, shoes for Adidas and consumer electronics for Samsung and Acer. After graduating with a BS in Industrial Design in 2001, he worked as an art assistant in the Industrial Light and Magic art department, which he says “was a fantastic experience that allowed me to make some good friends.”

After ILM Josh had the great opportunity to work for Doug Chiang (at Pexart/Iceblink Studios/ImageMovers Digital), “who was the person to promote me to the position of concept artist for a feature film. The first movie I created concept work for was Spielberg’s adaptation of H.G. Wells’ *War of the Worlds*.”

“I worked on several films under Doug’s direction for the next five years including *The Polar Express*, *Monster House*, *Beowulf* and *A Christmas Carol*. While working for Doug our small art department of approximately 15 people changed hands (and names) a couple of times until it officially





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Like many of Josh's pieces, "Jedi Ronin" hints at a rich backstory





An evocative piece titled "Dead Man Walking"



“I’m a digital hoarder. Each piece has one key reference that informs my space and one the mood and colour”

became a Disney company called ImageMovers Digital.”

It was while working for Doug that Josh was approached by The Orphanage for the position of lead concept artist on Frank Miller’s film of Will Eisner’s *The Spirit*, which he enthusiastically accepted.

“After that contract I moved to EA’s Visceral Games to work as a senior concept artist on several unannounced titles,” Josh continues. “I eventually returned to Industrial Light and Magic as a senior concept artist, where I worked on *Super 8*, *Cowboys and Aliens* and *Redtails*,” explains Josh.

Since leaving ILM Josh has served as an art director and artist for several mobile game titles and unannounced projects based out of Los Angeles. He has created concepts for films by Steven Spielberg, J.J. Abrams, Robert Zemeckis and Jon Favreau.

Here we showcase some of Josh’s personal concept work inspired by *Star Wars*.

www.conceptbyjosh.com







Recognisable even in silhouette, Darth Vader stands on the path of evil



MICHAEL PEDRO

The concept artist gives us an insight into creating a stunning environment

Artist Michael Pedro created this beautiful Path of Evil illustration for the Star Wars Galaxies trading card game. “The concept of this image was to really convey Darth Vader as a figure of temptation,” Michael explains. “I painted him standing on a volcanic rock formation on the planet Mustafar; the formations vaguely resemble the claws of a hand, a hand beckoning the viewer. Ultimately, I wanted to find a unique way of suggesting the allure of the Dark Side.”

“Darth Vader, terrifyingly mysterious, was a tragic figure who rose to power and fell from grace; essentially, Luke has no choice but to live the risk of following in Vader’s footsteps. Mystical trappings aside, it’s such a human story that virtually anyone can identify with. Plus, there’s the idea of being ‘the underdog’ who’s ultimately called to live out an important destiny. Luke went on an adventure that left him a hero – what’s not to like about that story?”

Michael began the piece as a series of black-and-white sketches, to outline the possibility of where the image could go. “Once I have a particular composition in mind, I’ll block in some loose, basic lighting, and then begin applying colour to really start building up the layers of the painting,” he says. “From there, it’s a simple matter of applying photo textures to quickly attain my desired level of detail, and then using digital paint

to ‘push’ the photo elements back and merge them into the rest of the image.”

Michael’s decision to become an artist in the first place was based on Star Wars artwork he discovered during college. “I was still in college when the prequel films’ art books were gaining popularity, and it was the designs and paintings of Ryan Church – the concept design supervisor on Attack of the Clones – that really made me sit back and say ‘Yeah, I want to be a concept artist.’”

And his love for the franchise continues. “I think it ultimately comes down to the idea of Star Wars being the ultimate sandbox. Between the released films, an entire galaxy has been established with scores of worlds, characters, and stories that can now, in turn, serve as inspiration to other creators. It’s a galaxy of seemingly endless possibilities, really.”

“Watching the trailers for The Force Awakens, I was reminded that no matter how much we all think we ‘know’ Star Wars, there’s always another episode or series or novel right around the corner that adds to the universe in ways we never imagined.”

Michael was “super-excited” to see Episode VII and pleased with its approach. “I’m a huge fan of J.J. Abrams’ more practical approach to set construction and special effects, so I was eager to see a new Star Wars that felt more immersive and real. That, and the updated Stormtrooper designs were absolutely terrific!”

www.michaelpedro.com



FENG ZHU

Feng Zhu, concept designer on Episode III, shares a production painting for an unseen Star Wars scene

Concept designer Feng Zhu has worked with Michael Bay, Luc Besson, Steven Spielberg and James Cameron, among other A-list directors, but his time with George Lucas was very special to him. “The original Star Wars films had a tremendous influence on me as a young kid,” says Feng. “During school, I drew X-wings and TIE fighters all over my homework, and got yelled at by the teachers. After coming home, I flew around in the Slave I toy, pretending to hunt down bounties. And like so many others kids, I believed in the Force and tried my best to move TV remotes or mind-influence girls to like me – neither of which

worked. Needless to say, I was, and still am, a huge Star Wars fan.”

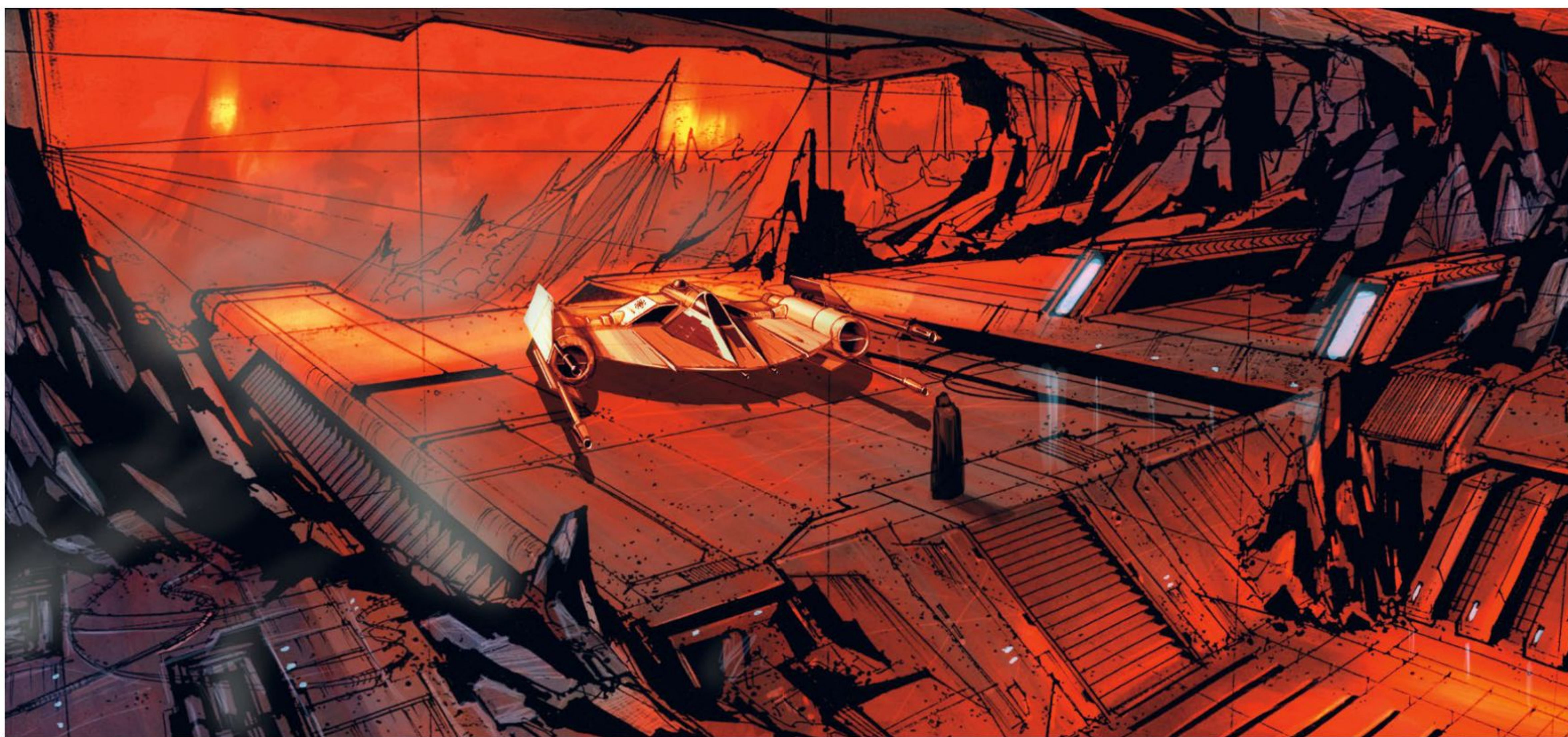
Feng studied Industrial Design at the Art Center in California but dropped out after one year, not because he was doing badly but because he felt it wasn’t suitable for him. “I knew what I wanted to do from a pretty early age – which is exactly what I’m doing now,” he explains. “I think a lot of people don’t recognise that until their mid 20s or early 30s. But I knew where I was going and took the appropriate steps to get there.”

Working on Episode III has been a highlight of Feng’s career, but perhaps surprisingly, Feng says “I don’t consider myself an artist at all... It’s all about the design. Drawing is only a very small part of design – it’s the last part of it.”

This painting visualises a scene from an imaginary script: “A small group of unidentified individuals discover the remains of a crashed Imperial shuttle on Hoth.”

“I start production paintings by listing the five Ws,” Feng explains. “They are what, when, where, who and why. You don’t need to answer all of the W questions, but the painting should contain information that enables the viewers to see those elements. For this painting, they are as follows. What: a crash-landed Imperial Shuttle. When: a few hours before sunset. Where: Hoth. Who: a small group (allegiance unknown). And why: this part is left for the viewer to decide.”

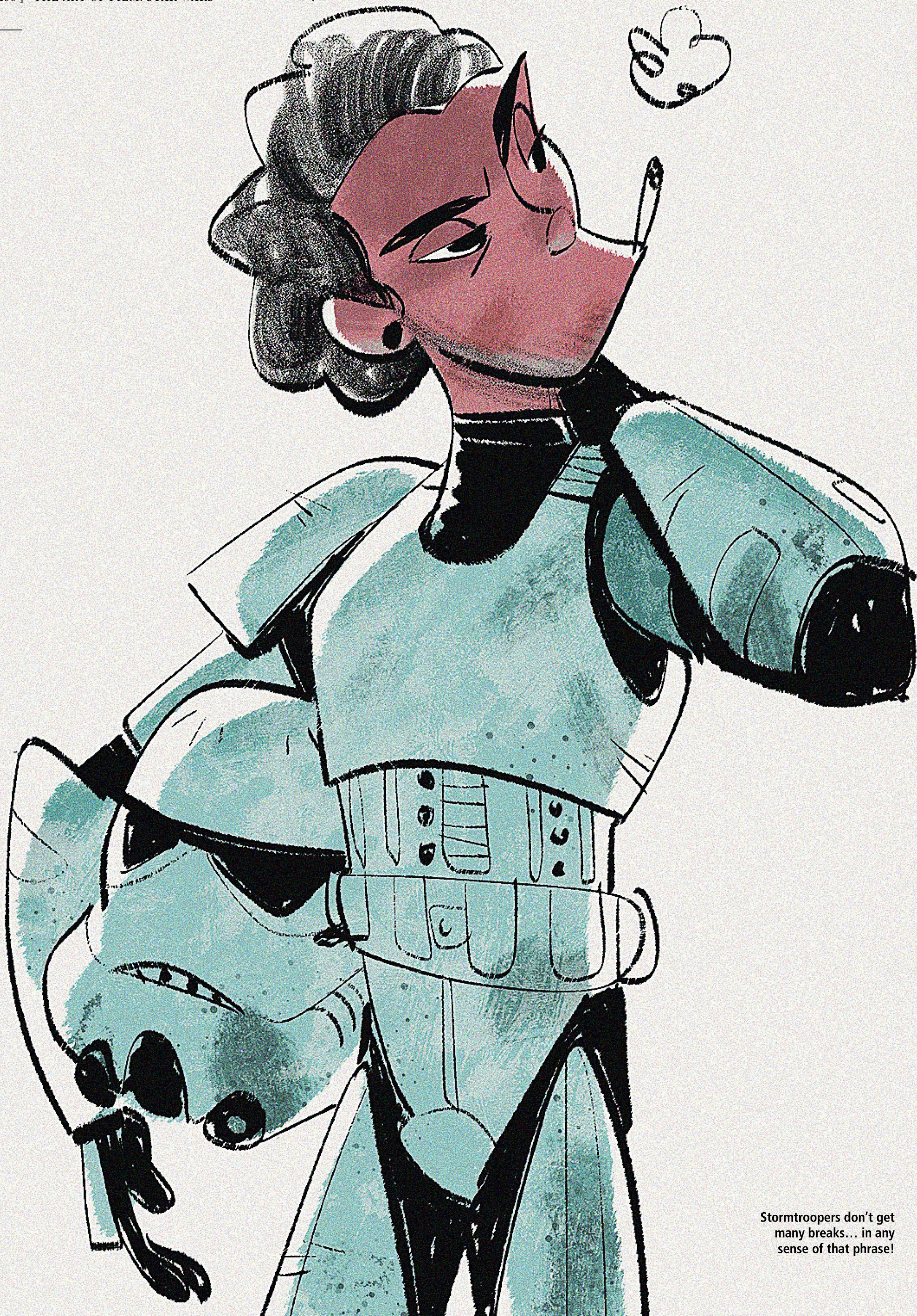
www.fengzhudesign.com



Feng Zhu designed many of the hard surface areas that were built into the miniature models for the Mustafar set, such as this landing area



"I thought the look of Mustafar came out great on screen. ILM did an awesome job capturing the grittiness of the environment," says Feng Zhu



Stormtroopers don't get many breaks... in any sense of that phrase!

Bobby captures the relationship between Luke and Yoda in just a few deft strokes



BOBBY PONTILLAS

Classic characters seen through fresh eyes and depicted in a different style...

Having seen the Star Wars films for the first time only in December 2015, Disney character artist Bobby

Pontillas is just a little late to this particular party. But, now a die-hard fan, he was so inspired that he immediately started creating his own fan art. "I can't tell you how many people I've talked to in the animation industry who've said that Star Wars is the reason they are artists today," he comments. "I just think the characters and the world they inhabit fired the imaginations of everyone. They want to be there and live in those worlds, and in your career as an artist you hope to inspire the younger generation in that same



"Only a few decades late," Bobby brings a new perspective to familiar characters

Bobby's charming artwork brings you even closer to characters you feel you already know well



“I wanted to convey how cool I thought these characters are and the relationships they share”

way and bring more of these kinds of worlds and characters to life.”

In creating his eye-catching character illustrations, Bobby was heavily inspired by the work of movie poster artists Drew Struzan and Olly Moss, despite their styles being so different from his own. “Olly’s Star Wars set is pure genius,” Bobby comments. With his own ideas set, he doesn’t mess about when it comes to creating artwork. “My process is somewhat light on its feet,” he says. “It’s a simple style and I like to work fast and loose,” he explains. “What I

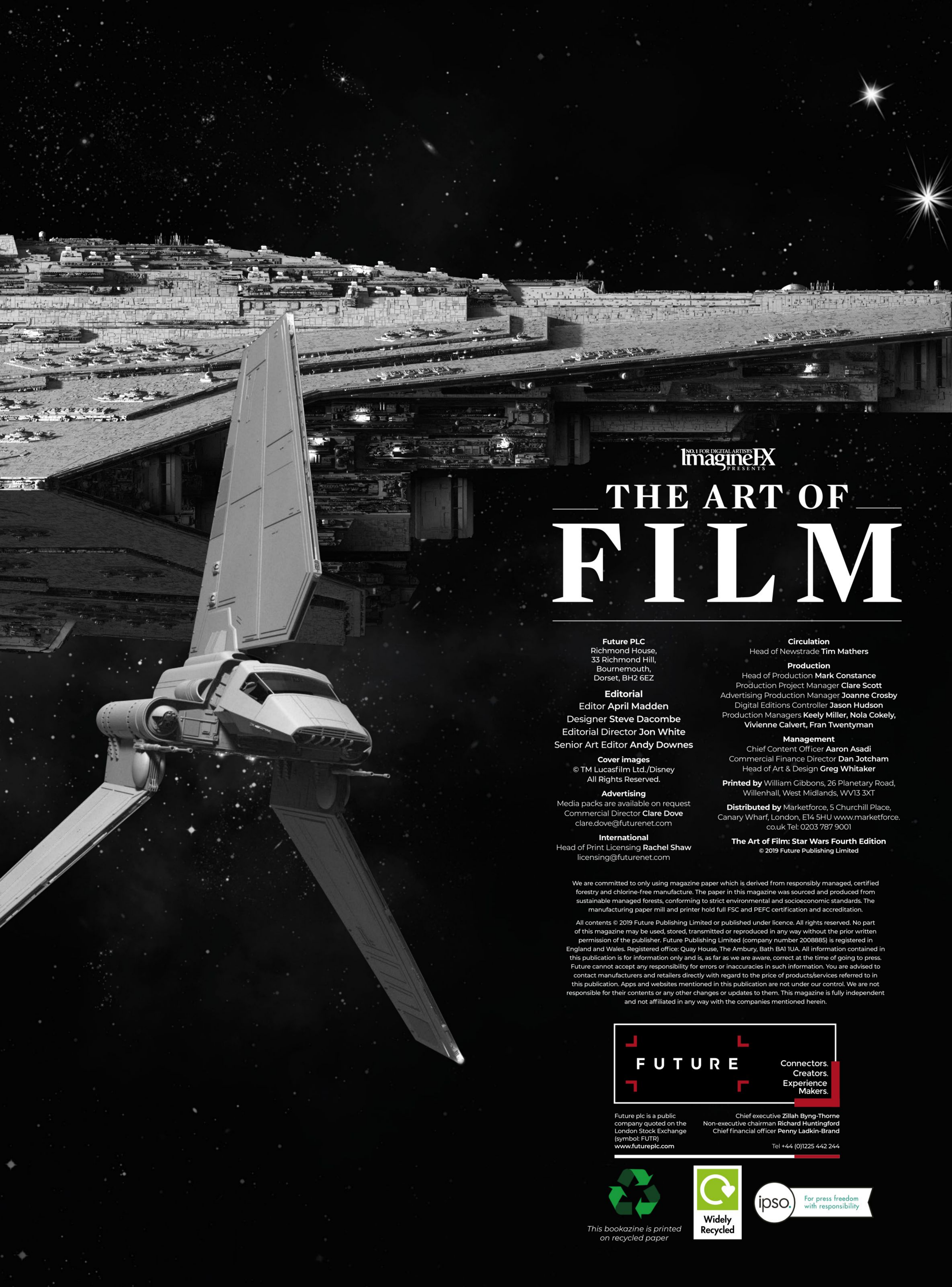
try to get across in my work is just a strong sense of character, which the Star Wars universe has in spades. I wanted to convey how cool I thought these characters are and the relationships they share.”

Bobby loves all the Star Wars characters but does admit to having some favourites. “I had a great time doing Yoda and Luke because those are my all-time favourite scenes in all of the films.”

Now a true Star Wars fan, Bobby is looking forward to future instalments. “I have faith that these films are going to knock everyone’s socks off. Just by the looks of the trailers, the reveals of the characters.” We look forward to his interpretations in turn!

bobbypontillas.blogspot.com





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THE ART OF FILM



Mario Alberti

Celebrate Star Wars through the eyes of the world's finest artists.
From the legacy of those who worked on the original 1977 film
to today's digital artists, Star Wars has never looked better.



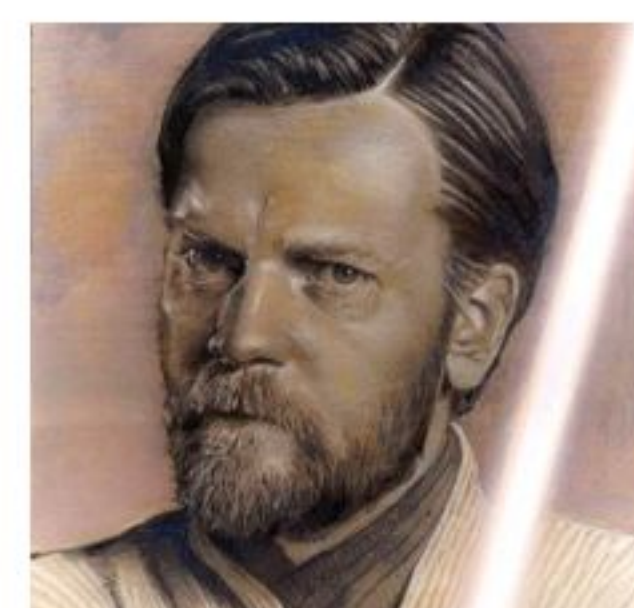
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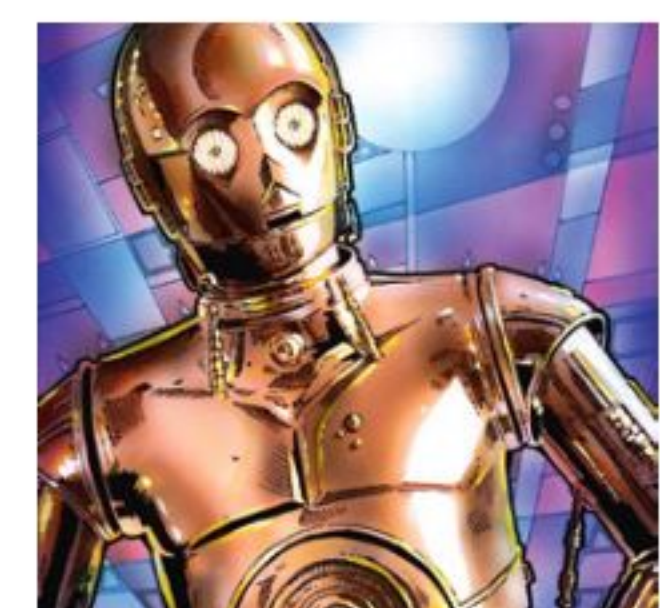
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